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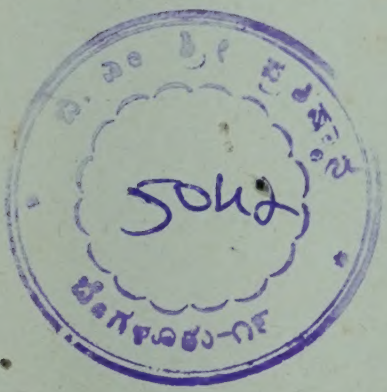
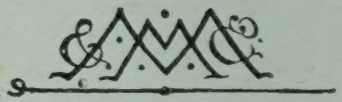
SENSE AND SENSIBILITY





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Sense and Sensibility

By

Jane Austen

Abridged by

Mrs. Frederick Boas

With Illustrations by Hugh Thomson

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INTRODUCTION

In the Memoir of Jane Austen by her nephew Austen Leigh, there occurs this passage: 'When *Sense and Sensibility* came out, some persons, who knew the family slightly, surmised that the two elder Miss Dashwoods were intended by the author for her sister and herself; but this could not have been the case. Cassandra's character might indeed represent the "sense" of Elinor, but Jane had little in common with the "sensibility" of Marianne. The young woman who, before the age of twenty, could so clearly discern the failings of Marianne Dashwood, could hardly have been subject to them herself.' This criticism is doubtless correct: Jane Austen never drew her characters direct from life, and emphatically denied such a suggestion; but the devotion of her sister to herself may well have been her model for that of Elinor to Marianne, the intensity of which, in the story, it is not always easy to understand.

Jane wrote from childhood; at first slight tales and verses, then burlesques which ridiculed the foolish romances of an earlier day. Neither she nor her family considered these suitable for publication: perhaps they were right. 'Love and Friendship,' with the other fragments lately edited by Mr. Chesterton, shows but the germ of that irony in which we have known her as an expert.

Her first complete novel was *Sense and Sensibility*, begun at Steventon in the form of letters, revised at Chawton, and published in 1811. Most critics consider it the least perfect

of her novels, but a special interest attaches to it from the fact that it was her first; we see her immature work, but we see also the genius that has made her immortal. Her characters may be burlesqued and exaggerated in their peculiarities, but they are real people every one of them; we may note the inconsistencies in the story, but we can go back to it again and again, with the same certainty of enjoyment as we do to the tales of Emma and the Bennets, of Fanny Price, Henry Tilney, or the matchless Mr. Collins.

No woman has ever equalled Jane Austen in the quiet irony with which she describes human nature, for no other woman has been gifted with the same almost uncanny insight into its frailties. There are few more striking figures in our literary history than that of the graceful homebred girl, growing to womanhood in the family parlour among nephews and nieces and parish acquaintances, and keeping somewhere in the background the little mahogany desk afterwards owned by one of the nieces, and producing from it, amid the routine of daily life, the characters that take rank with Evelina, Jane Eyre, and Mrs. Poyser.

In *Sense and Sensibility* we see her at work before she is quite master of her own art. Elinor's sense is too sensible for anyone of eighteen, even allowing for the fact that eighteen at that time equalled our twenty-eight; we may admire, but we can hardly credit, the rapidity with which she gets under control her feeling for the stolidly virtuous Edward Ferrars, when he seems to have behaved scarcely less honourably than the wicked Willoughby, whose gay and gallant doings insure their own pardon.

Marianne weeps more unrestrainedly and talks more lengthily on the subject of her emotions than could have been usual even with the most sentimental young ladies of the day: Mrs. Dashwood is too much of an older, sillier copy of Marianne to enlist the sympathy of anyone less attentive than the estimable Colonel Brandon: John Dashwood and his wife, that matchless pair of ingenious self-seekers, not content with

holding on to every penny of the inheritance that should have been shared with their young sisters, never part with so much as a tea-cup to them, in spite of intentions on his side that were absolutely prolific in gifts of a humble material kind: the Colonel is uniformly virtuous and dull: the Miss Steeles are sly or coy or foolish every moment of their existence: Willoughby's heartlessness is so colossal as only to be equalled by his folly: Mr. Palmer is rude, his wife is inane, and Sir John and Lady Middleton are boisterous and insipid from the beginning to the end of the story.

There is one exception: times change, and the standards of behaviour vary, so that Mrs. Jennings, here offered up invariably to ridicule for her vulgarity, is certainly less of a caricature to-day than any one else in the book. She would, on the whole, be rather a popular figure in an age when sincerity is valued before all else. True, she is given to such expressions as 'Lord bless my soul!', and she cheerfully taunts her son-in-law that she has what she calls the whip-hand over him, in that he has 'taken Charlotte off her hands and can't give her back again'; but she is generous, hospitable and unselfish, besides being possessed of a shrewd wit and an excellent judgment. She is the first to speak out in favour of the unfortunate Edward Ferrars, when the elder Miss Steele has brought the house about his ears by letting his engagement to *her* sister become known to *his*: she is ready to house and feed any number of young ladies in want of amusement, even if they do make fun of her behind her back; she is equally eager to cosset them with preserved cherries and old Constantia wine when their love affairs go wrong, or to nurse them and keep them company when thin shoes and damp gardens have turned a chill into that mysterious ailment diagnosed by Mr. Harris the apothecary as a putrid fever. Mrs. Jennings is one of Jane Austen's masterpieces; we can see her rolling into the room with her fat cheery smile, her knowing winks and nods, her bad grammar and her good heart; she shocked the nice susceptibilities of Elinor and Marianne, but Jane had a

bigger mind than they ; she knew that on a larger stage the figure of Mrs. Jennings would show up well, and on that larger stage she moves to-day, and her shrewd wit and contempt for all forms of sham bring applause from an audience who find the carefully considered opinions of Elinor and the violent emotions of Marianne something akin to tedious.

Although Jane Austen seems to have been deeply attached to her own nephews and nieces, and to have been greatly beloved by them, she rarely presents childhood in an attractive form. This book contributes four youthful figures to that gallery which might stand as a warning for all time to the parents of spoilt children.

There is Master Harry Dashwood, who by 'an imperfect articulation, an earnest desire of having his own way, many cunning tricks, and a great deal of noise,' had so worked on the feelings of his great-uncle as to deflect the estate of Norland Park from its rightful heirs even before the story opens. There are also the three infants of Sir John and Lady Middleton, the humouring of whom formed their mother's only resource, and thereby gave her one advantage over her husband, in that she could pursue it all the year round, whereas his sole occupation of hunting and shooting could be carried on but for part of the year. So the playful William and the spirited John only appear in such acts as stealing the scissors or untying the sashes of the devoted Miss Steeles ; and their sister, 'sweet little Anna Maria,' for whom the filigree basket was constructed by the joint labours of Elinor and the younger Miss Steele, after scratching herself with a pin, screams and howls and kicks her brothers, and unmoved by the consolations of kisses, lavender-water, and 'a mouthful of sugar-plums,' vanishes from the scene in search of further maternal indulgence in the shape of apricot marmalade.

In the description of places we see, throughout the book, the same method which was brought to such perfection later on: but the places that interest Jane Austen are in the country, not the town. Her books were all written at her two country

homes, Steventon and Chawton; none at either Bath or Southampton, where she lived for a time; the country was her natural element, and she loved the beauties of nature from her childhood. Her tastes are shown plainly in her first novel. The cottage at Barton is so clearly painted, we seem to know it so well, that we shrink with Willoughby from those grand plans for its enlargement in which Mrs. Dashwood is fond of indulging, and we find ourselves consoled by Elinor's reminder, 'do not be alarmed, nothing of the kind will be done; for my mother will never have money enough to attempt it.' On the other hand, Mrs. Jennings's house in London, in spite of the long time the young ladies stay there, remains to the end just a town-house, nothing more; and the crowded hot rooms where Elinor and Marianne 'attend' Lady Middleton and Mrs. Jennings at various social functions, might all have been situated in the same house for what we know about any of them. We never get a really good look at the shop in Sackville Street, in spite of the length of time Robert Ferrars took to choose his gold toothpick case; but once get back again to the country, and it is very different: the Downs behind Barton Cottage, the grounds and the bowling green at Allenham, the shrubberies and the Lombardy poplars of Cleveland, these all have the reality to our eyes which they had for their creator, who loved all country things and flourished in their midst.

It is fitting that the story should end as it began, in the country; and it is with relief that we enter the carriage with Mrs. Jennings and her charges, and accompany them on their two days' drive to Somerset. The gravel road, the sloping lawn, the winding paths, we know them all at Cleveland, and we climb with Marianne the little hill behind the house, and stand with her by the Grecian temple, straining our eyes with hers to catch a glimpse of the distant Combe Magna, the home of the faithless Willoughby. But the distance is too great, and Marianne gains nothing by her subsequent twilight wanderings in the wild wet parts of the shrubberies except a

fever so violent as to bring the lately-married but still admiring Willoughby posthaste to enquire remorsefully as to her rumoured decease.

In his conversation with Elinor he shows sufficient attractiveness to leave us with a feeling of regret both for himself and Marianne, whose marriage to Colonel Brandon, with his twinges of rheumatism, his flannel waistcoat, and his uniform gravity of conversation, must have afforded her a lifelong opportunity for practising sense, as opposed to sensibility.

THE AUTHOR

JANE AUSTEN was the younger daughter of the Rev. George Austen, and his wife, Cassandra Leigh, niece of the witty Master of Balliol, Dr. Theophilus Leigh. The humour so evident in the novelist was doubtless inherited from her mother's family. Her father was Rector of Steventon, in Hampshire, where she was born on December 16, 1775, and where she spent the first twenty-five years of her life. Her father retired from his living in 1801, and moved with his wife and two daughters to Bath, where he died in 1805. Five brothers were all older than Jane; the second brother Edward had been adopted by a cousin, and inherited property from him. After Mrs. Austen had spent four years at Southampton with her two daughters, Edward offered a home to them at Chawton Cottage, near Winchester, on his own estate. There Jane Austen lived till the last few months of her life, when she moved into rooms in Winchester with her sister, in order to be near medical aid for her increasing ill-health. But her malady was incurable, and she died on July 18, 1817, aged forty-two, and is buried in Winchester Cathedral, almost opposite the tomb of William of Wykeham.

CHAPTER I

THE family of Dashwood had been long settled in Sussex. Their estate was large, and their residence was at Norland Park, in the centre of their property, where, for many generations, they had lived in so respectable a manner as to engage the general good opinion of their surrounding acquaintance. The late owner of this estate was a single man, who lived to a very advanced age, and who for many years of his life had a constant companion and housekeeper in his sister. But her death, which happened ten years before his own, produced a great alteration in his home; for to supply her loss he invited and received into his house the family of his nephew Mr. Henry Dashwood, the legal inheritor of the Norland estate, and the person to whom he intended to bequeath it. In the society of his nephew and niece, and their children, the old gentleman's days were comfortably spent. By a former marriage Mr. Henry Dashwood had one son; by his present lady three daughters. The son was amply provided for by the fortune of his mother. By his own marriage, likewise, which happened soon afterwards, he added to his wealth. To him, therefore, the succession to the Norland estate was not so really important as to his sisters; for their fortune, independent of what might arise to them from their father's inheriting that

property, could be but small. Their mother had nothing, and their father only seven thousand pounds in his own disposal; for the remaining moiety of his first wife's fortune was also secured to her child, and he had only a life-interest in it.

The old gentleman died: his will was read; and, like almost every other will, gave as much disappointment as pleasure. He was neither so unjust nor so ungrateful as to leave his estate from his nephew, but he left it to him on such terms as destroyed half the value of the bequest. Mr. Dashwood had wished for it more for the sake of his wife and daughters than for himself or his son; but to his son, and his son's son, a child of four years old, it was secured, in such a way as to leave to himself no power of providing for those who were most dear to him.

Mr. Dashwood's disappointment was, at first, severe: but his temper was cheerful and sanguine; and he might reasonably hope to live many years, and, by living economically, lay by a considerable sum from the produce of an estate already large, and capable of almost immediate improvement. But the fortune, which had been so tardy in coming, was his only one twelvemonth. He survived his uncle no longer; and ten thousand pounds, including the late legacies, was all that remained for his widow and daughters.

His son was sent for as soon as his danger was known, and to him Mr. Dashwood recommended, with all the strength and urgency which illness could command, the interest of his mother-in-law and sisters.

Mr. John Dashwood had not the strong feelings of the rest of the family; but he was affected by a recommenda-

tion of such a nature at such a time, and he promised to do everything in his power to make them comfortable.

He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold-hearted and rather selfish is to be ill-disposed. Had he married a more amiable woman, he might even have been made amiable himself ; for he was very young when he married, and very fond of his wife. But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself—more narrow-minded and selfish.

When he gave his promise to his father, he meditated within himself to increase the fortunes of his sisters by the present of a thousand pounds apiece. "Yes, he would give them three thousand pounds. It would be liberal and handsome. It would be enough to make them completely easy. Three thousand pounds! He could spare so considerable a sum with little inconvenience." He thought of it all day long and for many days successively, and he did not repent.

No sooner was his father's funeral over than Mrs. John Dashwood, without sending any notice of her intention to her mother-in-law, arrived with her child and their attendants. Mrs. John Dashwood had never been a favourite with any of her husband's family ; but she had had no opportunity, till the present, of showing them with how little attention to the comfort of other people she could act, when occasion required it.

So acutely did Mrs. Dashwood feel this ungracious behaviour, and so earnestly did she despise her daughter-in-law for it, that, on the arrival of the latter, she would have quitted the house for ever, had not the entreaty of her eldest girl induced her first to reflect on the propriety of going, and her own tender love for all her three children

determined her afterwards to stay, and for their sakes avoid a breach with their brother.

Elinor, this eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding and coolness of judgment which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. She had an excellent heart; her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong, but she knew how to govern them. It was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.

Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever, but eager in everything: her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting; she was everything but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great.

Margaret, the other sister, was a good-humoured, well-disposed girl; but as she had already imbibed a good deal of Marianne's romance, without having much of her sense, she did not, at thirteen, bid fair to equal her sisters at a more advanced period of life.

CHAPTER II

Mrs. John Dashwood now installed herself mistress of Norland; and her mother and sisters-in-law were degraded to the condition of visitors. As such, however, they were treated by her with quiet civility; and by her husband with as much kindness as he could feel towards anybody beyond himself, his wife, and their child.

Mrs. John Dashwood did not at all approve of what her husband intended to do for his sisters. To take three thousand pounds from the fortune of their dear little boy would be impoverishing him to the most dreadful degree. She begged him to think again on the subject. How could he answer it to himself to rob his child, and his only child too, of so large a sum? And what possible claim could the Miss Dashwoods, who were related to him only by half blood, which she considered as no relationship at all, have on his generosity to so large an amount? It was very well known that no affection was ever supposed to exist between the children of any man by different marriages; and why was he to ruin himself, and their poor little Harry, by giving away all his money to his half-sisters?

"It was my father's last request to me," replied her husband, "that I should assist his widow and daughters."

"Well, then, let something be done for them; but that

something need not be three thousand pounds. Consider," she added, "that when the money is once parted with, it never can return. Your sisters will marry, and it will be gone for ever. If, indeed, it could ever be restored to our poor little boy——"

"Why, to be sure," said her husband, very gravely, "that would make a great difference. The time may come when Harry will regret that so large a sum was parted with. If he should have a numerous family, for instance, it would be a very convenient addition."

"To be sure it would."

"Perhaps, then, it would be better for all parties if the sum were diminished one half. Five hundred pounds would be a prodigious increase to their fortunes! I think I may afford to give them five hundred pounds apiece. As it is, without any addition of mine they will each have above three thousand pounds on their mother's death—a very comfortable fortune for any young woman."

"To be sure it is; and, indeed, it strikes me that they can want no addition at all. They will have ten thousand pounds divided amongst them. If they marry, they will be sure of doing well; and if they do not, they may all live very comfortably together on the interest of ten thousand pounds."

"That is very true, and, therefore, I do not know whether, upon the whole, it would not be more advisable to do something for their mother while she lives, rather than for them—something of the annuity kind, I mean. My sisters would feel the good effects of it as well as herself. A hundred a year would make them all perfectly comfortable."

His wife hesitated a little, however, in giving her consent to this plan.

"To be sure," said she, "it is better than parting with fifteen hundred pounds at once. But then, if Mrs. Dashwood should live fifteen years, we shall be completely taken in."

"Fifteen years, my dear Fanny! Her life cannot be worth half that purchase."

"Certainly not; but if you observe, people always live for ever when there is any annuity to be paid them; and she is very stout and healthy, and hardly forty. An annuity is a very serious business; it comes over and over every year, and there is no getting rid of it."

"It is certainly an unpleasant thing," replied Mr. Dashwood, "to have those kind of yearly drains on one's income. To be tied down to the regular payment of such a sum, on every rent-day, is by no means desirable: it takes away one's independence."

"Undoubtedly; and, after all, you have no thanks for it. They think themselves secure; you do no more than what is expected, and it raises no gratitude at all. If I were you, whatever I did should be done at my own discretion entirely. I would not bind myself to allow them anything yearly. It may be very inconvenient some years to spare a hundred, or even fifty pounds, from our own expenses."

"I believe you are right, my love; it will be better that there should be no annuity in the case. A present of fifty pounds now and then will prevent their ever being distressed for money, and will, I think, be amply discharging my promise to my father."

"To be sure it will. Indeed, to say the truth, I am

convinced within myself that your father had no idea of your giving them any money at all. The assistance he thought of, I dare say, was only such as might be reasonably expected of you; for instance, such as looking out for a comfortable small house for them, helping them to move their things, and sending them presents of fish and game, and so forth, whenever they are in season."

"Upon my word," said Mr. Dashwood, "I believe you are perfectly right. My father certainly could mean nothing more by his request to me than what you say. I clearly understand it now, and I will strictly fulfil my engagement by such acts of assistance and kindness to them as you have described. When my mother removes into another house, my services shall be readily given to accommodate her as far as I can. Some little present of furniture, too, may be acceptable then."

"Certainly," returned Mrs. John Dashwood: "and the set of breakfast-china is twice as handsome as what belongs to this house; a great deal too handsome, in my opinion, for any place *they* can ever afford to live in. But, however, so it is. Your father thought only of *them*. And I must say this, that you owe no particular gratitude to him, nor attention to his wishes: for we very well know that if he could he would have left almost everything in the world to *them*."

This argument was irresistible. It gave to his intentions whatever of decision was wanting before: and he finally resolved that it would be absolutely unnecessary, if not highly indecorous, to do more for the widow and children of his father than such kind of neighbourly acts as his own wife pointed out.

CHAPTER III

Mrs. Dashwood had been informed by her husband of the solemn promise on the part of his son in their favour which gave comfort to his last earthly reflections. She doubted the sincerity of this assurance no more than he had doubted it himself.

The contempt which she had, very early in their acquaintance, felt for her daughter-in-law was very much increased by the further knowledge of her character which half a year's residence in her family afforded; and perhaps in spite of every consideration, of politeness or maternal affection on the side of the former, the two ladies might have found it impossible to have lived together so long, had not a particular circumstance occurred to give still greater eligibility, according to the opinions of Mrs. Dashwood, to her daughter's continuance at Norland.

This circumstance was a growing attachment between her eldest girl and the brother of Mrs. John Dashwood, a gentleman-like and pleasing young man, who was introduced to their acquaintance soon after his sister's establishment at Norland, and who had since spent the greatest part of his time there.

Edward Ferrars was not recommended to their good opinion by any peculiar graces of person or address. He

was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open affectionate heart. His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid improvement. But he was neither fitted by abilities nor disposition to answer the wishes of his mother and sister, who longed to see him distinguished as—they hardly knew what. They wanted him to make a fine figure in the world in some manner or other. His mother wished to interest him in political concerns, to get him into Parliament, or to see him connected with some of the great men of the day. Mrs. John Dashwood wished it likewise; but in the meanwhile, till one of these superior blessings could be obtained, it would have quieted her ambition to see him driving a barouche. But Edward had no turn for great men or barouches. All his wishes centred in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life. Fortunately, he had a younger brother who was more promising.

CHAPTER IV

"WHAT a pity it is, Elinor," said Marianne, "that Edward should have no taste for drawing!"

"No taste for drawing!" replied Elinor; "why should you think so? He does not draw himself, indeed, but he has great pleasure in seeing the performances of other people; and I assure you he is by no means deficient in natural taste, though he has not had opportunities of improving it. Had he ever been in the way of learning, I think he would have drawn very well. He distrusts his own judgment in such matters so much that he is always unwilling to give his opinion on any picture; but he has an innate propriety and simplicity of taste, which, in general, direct him perfectly right."

Marianne was afraid of offending, and said no more on the subject; but the kind of approbation which Elinor described as excited in him by the drawings of other people was very far from that rapturous delight which, in her opinion, could alone be called taste. Yet, though smiling within herself at the mistake, she honoured her sister for that blind partiality to Edward which produced it.

"I hope, Marianne," continued Elinor, "you do not consider him as deficient in general taste. Indeed, I think I may say that you cannot, for your behaviour to

him is perfectly cordial; and if *that* were your opinion, I am sure you could never be civil to him."

Marianne hardly knew what to say. She would not wound the feelings of her sister on any account, and yet to say what she did not believe was impossible. At length she replied,—

"Do not be offended, Elinor, if my praise of him is not in everything equal to your sense of his merits. I have not had so many opportunities of estimating the minuter propensities of his mind, his inclinations and tastes, as you have; but I have the highest opinion in the world of his goodness and sense. I think him everything that is worthy and amiable."

"I am sure," replied Elinor, with a smile, "that his dearest friends could not be dissatisfied with such commendation as that. I do not perceive how you could express yourself more warmly."

Marianne was rejoiced to find her sister so easily pleased.

"Of his sense and his goodness," continued Elinor, "no one can, I think, be in doubt, who has seen him often enough to engage him in unreserved conversation. The excellence of his understanding and his principles can be concealed only by that shyness which too often keeps him silent. You know enough of him to do justice to his solid worth. But of his minuter propensities, as you call them, you have, from peculiar circumstances, been kept more ignorant than myself. He and I have been at times thrown a good deal together, while you have been wholly engrossed on the most affectionate principle by my mother. I have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments, and heard his opinion on sub-

jects of literature and taste; and, upon the whole, I venture to pronounce that his mind is well informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure. His abilities in every respect improve as much upon acquaintance as his manners and person. At first sight, his address is certainly not striking; and his person can hardly be called handsome, till the expression of his eyes, which are uncommonly good, and the general sweetness of his countenance, is perceived. At present I know him so well that I think him really handsome; or, at least, almost so. What say you, Marianne?"

"I shall very soon think him handsome, Elinor, if I do not now. When you tell me to love him as a brother, I shall no more see imperfection in his face than I now do in his heart."

Elinor started at this declaration, and was sorry for the warmth she had been betrayed into in speaking of him. She tried to explain the real state of the case to her sister.

"I do not attempt to deny," said she, "that I think very highly of him—that I greatly esteem, that I like him."

Marianne here burst forth with indignation,—

"Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted Elinor! Oh, worse than cold-hearted! Ashamed of being otherwise! Use those words again, and I will leave the room this moment."

Elinor could not help laughing. "Excuse me," said she; "and be assured that I meant no offence to you, by speaking in so quiet a way of my own feelings. Believe

them to be stronger than I have declared; believe them, in short, to be such as his merit, and the suspicion —the hope—of his affection for me may warrant, without imprudence or folly. But further than this you must *not* believe. I am by no means assured of his regard for me. There are moments when the extent of it seems doubtful; and till his sentiments are fully known, you cannot wonder at my wishing to avoid any encouragement of my own partiality, by believing or calling it more than it is."

Elinor had given her real opinion to her sister. She could not consider her partiality for Edward in so prosperous a state as Marianne had believed it. There was at times a want of spirits about him which, if it did not denote indifference, spoke a something almost as unpromising. Nay, the longer they were together the more doubtful seemed the nature of his regard; and sometimes for a few painful minutes, she believed it to be no more than friendship.

But whatever might really be its limits, it was enough, when perceived by his sister, to make her uneasy, and at the same time (which was still more common) to make her uncivil. She took the first opportunity of affronting her mother-in-law on the occasion, talking to her so expressively of her brother's great expectations, of Mrs. Ferrar's resolution that both her sons should marry well, and of the danger attending any young woman who attempted to *draw him in*, that Mrs. Dashwood could neither pretend to be unconscious nor endeavour to be calm. She gave her an answer which marked her contempt, and instantly left the room, resolving that, whatever might be the inconvenience or expense of so sudden

a removal, her beloved Elinor should not be exposed another week to such insinuations.

In this state of her spirits a letter was delivered to her from the post, which contained a proposal particularly well timed. It was the offer of a small house, on very easy terms, belonging to a relation of her own—a gentleman of consequence and property in Devonshire. He understood that she was in need of a dwelling; and though the house he now offered her was merely a cottage, he assured her that everything should be done to it which she might think necessary, if the situation pleased her. He earnestly pressed her, after giving the particulars of the house and garden, to come with her daughters to Barton Park, the place of his own residence, from whence she might judge herself whether Barton Cottage—for the houses were in the same parish—could, by any alteration, be made comfortable for her. He seemed really anxious to accommodate them; and the whole of his letter was written in so friendly a style as could not fail of giving pleasure to his cousin—more especially at a moment when she was suffering under the cold and unfeeling behaviour of her nearer connections. She needed no time for deliberation or inquiry. Her resolution was formed as she read. She instantly wrote Sir John Middleton her acknowledgment of his kindness, and her acceptance of his proposal; and then hastened to show both letters to her daughters, that she might be secure of their approbation before her answer was sent.

Elinor had always thought it would be more prudent for them to settle at some distance from Norland than immediately amongst their present acquaintance. On *that* head, therefore, it was not for her to oppose her

mother's intention of removing into Devonshire. The house, too, as described by Sir John, was on so simple a scale, and the rent so uncommonly moderate, as to leave her no right of objection on either point; and therefore, though it was not a plan which brought any charm to her fancy, though it was a removal from the vicinity of Norland beyond her wishes, she made no attempt to dissuade her mother from sending a letter of acquiescence.

CHAPTER V

No sooner was her answer dispatched than Mrs. Dashwood indulged herself in the pleasure of announcing to her son-in-law and his wife that she was provided with a house, and should incommode them no longer than till everything were ready for her inhabiting it. They heard her with surprise. Mrs. John Dashwood said nothing, but her husband civilly hoped that she would not be settled far from Norland. She had great satisfaction in replying that she was going into Devonshire. Edward turned hastily towards her, on hearing this, and in a voice of surprise and concern, which required no explanation to her, repeated, "Devonshire! Are you. indeed, going there? So far from hence! And to what part of it?" She explained the situation. It was within four miles northward of Exeter.

"It is but a cottage," she continued, "but I hope to see many of my friends in it. A room or two can easily be added; and if my friends find no difficulty in travelling so far to see me, I am sure I will find none in accommodating them."

She concluded with a very kind invitation to Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood to visit her at Barton; and to Edward she gave one with still greater affection.

The man and one of the maids were sent off immediately into Devonshire, to prepare the house for their mistress's arrival; for, as Lady Middleton was entirely unknown to Mrs. Dashwood, she preferred going directly to the cottage to being a visitor at Barton Park; and she relied so undoubtingly on Sir John's description of the house as to feel no curiosity to examine it herself till she entered it as her own.

In a very few weeks from the day which brought Sir John Middleton's first letter to Norland, everything was so far settled in their future abode as to enable Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters to begin their journey.

Many were the tears shed by them in their last adieus to a place so much beloved. "Dear, dear, Norland," said Marianne, as she wandered alone before the house on the last evening of their being there, "when shall I cease to regret you, when learn to feel a home elsewhere? Oh, happy house, could you know what I suffer in now viewing you from this spot, from whence, perhaps, I may view you no more!"

CHAPTER VI

The first part of their journey was performed in too melancholy a disposition to be otherwise than tedious and unpleasant. But as they drew towards the end of it, their interest in the appearance of a country which they were to inhabit overcame their dejection, and a view of Barton Valley, as they entered it, gave them cheerfulness. It was a pleasant, fertile spot, well wooded, and rich in pasture. After winding along it for more than a mile, they reached their own house. A small green court was the whole of its demesne in front, and a neat wicket-gate admitted them into it.

As a house, Barton Cottage, though small, was comfortable and compact; but as a cottage it was defective, for the building was regular, the roof was tiled, the window-shutters were not painted green, nor were the walls covered with honey-suckles. A narrow passage led directly through the house into the garden behind. On each side of the entrance was a sitting-room about sixteen feet square, and beyond them were the offices and the stairs. Four bedrooms and two garrets formed the rest of the house. It had not been built many years, and was in good repair. In comparison of Norland, it was poor and small indeed; but the tears which recollection called forth as they entered the house were soon

dried away. They were cheered by the joy of the servants on their arrival, and each for the sake of the others resolved to appear happy.

Marianne's pianoforte was unpacked and properly disposed of; and Elinor's drawings were affixed to the walls of their sitting-room.

In such employments as these they were interrupted soon after breakfast the next day by the entrance of their landlord, who called to welcome them to Barton, and to offer them every accommodation from his own house and garden in which theirs might at present be deficient. Sir John Middleton was a good-looking man, about forty. His countenance was thoroughly good-humoured, and his manners were as friendly as the style of his letter. Their arrival seemed to afford him real satisfaction, and their comfort to be an object of real solicitude to him. He said much of his earnest desire of their living on the most sociable terms with his family, and pressed them so cordially to dine at Barton Park every day till they were better settled at home, that, though his entreaties were carried to a point of perseverance beyond civility, they could not give offence. His kindness was not confined to words; for within an hour after he left them, a large basket, full of garden stuff and fruit, arrived from the Park, which was followed before the end of the day by a present of game. He insisted, moreover, on conveying all their letters to and from the post for them, and would not be denied the satisfaction of sending them his newspaper every day.

Lady Middleton had sent a very civil message by him, denoting her intention of waiting on Mrs. Dashwood as

"So shy before company."

soon as she could be assured that her visit would be no inconvenience; and as this message was answered by an invitation equally polite, her ladyship was introduced to them the next day.

They were, of course, very anxious to see a person on whom so much of their comfort at Barton must depend; and the elegance of her appearance was favourable to their wishes. Lady Middleton was not more than six or seven and twenty; her face was handsome, her figure tall and striking, and her address graceful. Her manners had all the elegance which her husband's wanted. But they would have been improved by some share of his frankness and warmth; and her visit was long enough to detract something from their first admiration, by showing that, though perfectly well bred, she was reserved, cold, and had nothing to say for herself beyond the most commonplace inquiry or remark.

Conversation, however, was not wanted, for Sir John was very chatty, and Lady Middleton had taken the wise precaution of bringing with her their eldest child, a fine little boy about six years old; by which means there was one subject always to be recurred to by the ladies in case of extremity, for they had to inquire his name and age, admire his beauty, and ask him questions which his mother answered for him, while he hung about her and held down his head, to the great surprise of her ladyship, who wondered at his being so shy before company, as he could make noise enough at home. On every formal visit a child ought to be of the party, by way of provision for discourse. In the present case it took up ten minutes to determine whether the boy were most like his father or mother, and in what particular he resembled

either, for of course everybody differed, and everybody was astonished at the opinion of the others.

An opportunity was soon to be given to the Dashwoods of debating on the rest of the children, as Sir John would not leave the house without securing their promise of dining at the Park the next day.

CHAPTER VII

Barton Park was about half a mile from the cottage. The house was large and handsome ; and the Middletons lived in a style of equal hospitality and elegance. The former was for Sir John's gratification, the latter for that of his lady. They were scarcely ever without some friends staying with them in the house, and they kept more company of every kind than any other family in the neighbourhood. It was necessary to the happiness of both ; for, however dissimilar in temper and outward behaviour, they strongly resembled each other in that total want of talent and taste which confined their employments, unconnected with such as society produced, within a very narrow compass. Sir John was a sportsman, Lady Middleton a mother. He hunted and shot, and she humoured her children ; and these were their only resources. Lady Middleton had the advantage of being able to spoil her children all the year round, while Sir John's independent employments were in existence only half the time.

Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters were met at the door of the house by Sir John, who welcomed them to Barton Park with unaffected sincerity ; and as he attended them to the drawing-room, repeated to the young ladies the concern which the same subject had drawn

from him the day before, at being unable to get any smart young men to meet them. They would see, he said, only one gentleman there besides himself—a particular friend who was staying at the Park, but who was neither very young nor very gay. Luckily, Lady Middleton's mother had arrived at Barton within the last hour ; and as she was a very cheerful, agreeable woman, he hoped the young ladies would not find it so very dull as they might imagine.

Mrs. Jennings, Lady Middleton's mother, was a good-humoured, merry, fat, elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy, and rather vulgar. She was full of jokes and laughter, and before dinner was over had said many witty things on the subject of lovers and husbands ; hoped they had not left their hearts behind them in Sussex, and pretended to see them blush, whether they did or not.

Colonel Brandon, the friend of Sir John, seemed no more adapted by resemblance of manner to be his friend than Lady Middleton was to be his wife, or Mrs. Jennings to be Lady Middleton's mother. He was silent and grave. His appearance, however, was not unpleasing, in spite of his being, in the opinion of Marianne and Margaret, an absolute old bachelor, for he was on the wrong side of five-and-thirty ; but though his face was not handsome, his countenance was sensible, and his address was particularly gentleman-like.

There was nothing in any of the party which could recommend them as companions to the Dashwoods ; but the cold insipidity of Lady Middleton was so particularly repulsive, that in comparison of it the gravity of Colonel Brandon, and even the boisterous mirth of

Sir John and his mother-in-law, was interesting. Lady Middleton seemed to be roused to enjoyment only by the entrance of her four noisy children after dinner, who pulled her about, tore her clothes, and put an end to every kind of discourse, except what related to themselves.

CHAPTER VIII

Mrs. Jennings was a widow with an ample jointure. She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married ; and she had now, therefore, nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world. She was remarkably quick in the discovery of attachments, and this kind of discernment enabled her, soon after her arrival at Barton, decisively to pronounce that Colonel Brandon was very much in love with Marianne Dashwood. She rather suspected it to be so, on the very first evening of their being together, from his listening so attentively while she sang to them ; and when the visit was returned by the Middletons dining at the cottage, the fact was ascertained by his listening to her again. It must be so. She was perfectly convinced of it. It would be an excellent match, for *he* was rich, and *she* was handsome. Mrs. Jennings had been anxious to see Colonel Brandon well married, ever since her connection with Sir John first brought him to her knowledge ; and she was always anxious to get a good husband for every pretty girl.

The immediate advantage to herself was by no means inconsiderable, for it supplied her with endless jokes against them both. At the Park she laughed at the colonel, and in the cottage at Marianne. To the former her raillery was probably, as far as it regarded only him-

self, perfectly indifferent; but to the latter it was at first incomprehensible: and when its object was understood, she hardly knew whether most to laugh at its absurdity, or censure its impertinence; for she considered it as an unfeeling reflection on the colonel's advanced years, and on his forlorn condition as an old bachelor.

Mrs. Dashwood, who could not think a man five years younger than herself so exceedingly ancient as he appeared to the youthful fancy of her daughter, ventured to clear Mrs. Jennings from the probability of wishing to throw ridicule on his age.

"But at least, mamma, you cannot deny the absurdity of the accusation, though you may not think it intentionally ill-natured. Colonel Brandon is certainly younger than Mrs. Jennings, but he is old enough to be *my* father; and if he were ever animated enough to be in love, must have long outlived every sensation of the kind. It is too ridiculous! When is a man to be safe from such wit, if age and infirmity will not protect him?"

"Infirmity!" said Elinor. "Do you call Colonel Brandon infirm? I can easily suppose that his age may appear much greater to you than to my mother, but you can hardly deceive yourself as to his having the use of his limbs."

"Did you not hear him complain of the rheumatism? and is not that the commonest infirmity of declining life?"

"My dearest child," said her mother, laughing, "at this rate you must be in continual terror of my decay, and it must seem to you a miracle that my life has been extended to the advanced age of forty."

"Mamma, you are not doing me justice. I know very well that Colonel Brandon is not old enough to make his friends yet apprehensive of losing him in the course of nature. He may live twenty years longer. But thirty-five has nothing to do with matrimony."

"Perhaps," said Elinor, "thirty-five and seventeen had better not have anything to do with matrimony together. But if there should by any chance happen to be a woman who is single at seven-and-twenty, I should not think Colonel Brandon's being thirty-five any objection to his marrying *her*."

"A woman of seven-and-twenty," said Marianne, after pausing a moment, "can never hope to feel or inspire affection again; and if her home be uncomfortable, or her fortune small, I can suppose that she might bring herself to submit to the offices of a nurse, for the sake of the provision and security of a wife. In his marrying such a woman, therefore, there would be nothing unsuitable. It would be a compact of convenience, and the world would be satisfied. In my eyes it would be no marriage at all, but that would be nothing. To me it would seem only a commercial exchange, in which each wished to be benefited at the expense of the other."

"It would be impossible, I know," replied Elinor, "to convince you that a woman of seven-and-twenty could feel for a man of thirty-five anything near enough to love to make him a desirable companion to her. But I must object to your dooming Colonel Brandon and his wife to the constant confinement of a sick chamber, merely because he chanced to complain yesterday (a very cold, damp day) of a slight rheumatic feel in one of his shoulders."

"But he talked of flannel waistcoats," said Marianne; "and with me a flannel waistcoat is invariably connected with aches, cramps, rheumatisms, and every species of ailment that can afflict the old and the feeble."

"Had he been only in a violent fever, you would not have despised him half so much. Confess, Marianne, is not there something interesting to you in the flushed cheek, hollow eye, and quick pulse of a fever?"

Soon after this, upon Elinor's leaving the room, "Mamma," said Marianne, "I have alarm on the subject of illness which I cannot conceal from you. I am sure Edward Ferrars is not well. We have now been here almost a fortnight, and yet he does not come. Nothing but real indisposition could occasion this extraordinary delay. What else can detain him at Norland?"

"Had you any idea of his coming so soon?" said Mrs. Dashwood. "*I* had none. On the contrary, if I have felt any anxiety at all on the subject, it has been in recollecting that he sometimes showed a want of pleasure and readiness in accepting my invitation, when I talked of his coming to Barton. Does Elinor expect him already?"

"I have never mentioned it to her, but, of course, she must."

"I rather think you are mistaken, for when I was talking to her yesterday of getting a new grate for the spare bed-chamber, she observed that there was no immediate hurry for it, as it was not likely that the room would be wanted for some time."

"How strange this is! What can be the meaning of it? But the whole of their behaviour to each other has been unaccountable. How cold, how composed,

were their last adieus! How languid their conversation the last evening of their being together! In Edward's farewell there was no distinction between Elinor and me: it was the good wishes of an affectionate brother to both. Twice did I leave them purposely together in the course of the last morning, and each time did he most unaccountably follow me out of the room. And Elinor, in quitting Norland and Edward, cried not as I did. Even now her self-command is invariable. When is she dejected or melancholy? When does she try to avoid society, or appear restless and dissatisfied in it?"

CHAPTER IX

THE Dashwoods were now settled at Barton with tolerable comfort to themselves.

The whole country about them abounded in beautiful walks. The high downs, which invited them from almost every window of the cottage to seek the exquisite enjoyment of air on their summits, were a happy alternative when the dirt of the valleys beneath shut up their superior beauties; and towards one of these hills did Marianne and Margaret one memorable morning direct their steps, attracted by the partial sunshine of a showery sky, and unable longer to bear the confinement which the settled rain of the two preceding days had occasioned. The weather was not tempting enough to draw the two others from their pencil and their book, in spite of Marianne's declaration that the day would be lastingly fair, and that every threatening cloud would be drawn off from their hills; and the two girls set off together.

They gaily ascended the downs, rejoicing in their own penetration at every glimpse of blue sky; and when they caught in their faces the animating gales of a high south-westerly wind, they pitied the fears which had prevented their mother and Elinor from sharing such delightful sensations.

"Is there a felicity in the world," said Marianne, "superior to this? Margaret, we will walk here at least two hours."

Margaret agreed, and they pursued their way against the wind, resisting it with laughing delight for about twenty minutes longer, when suddenly the clouds united over their heads, and a driving rain set full in their face. Chagrined and surprised, they were obliged, though unwillingly, to turn back, for no shelter was nearer than their own house. One consolation, however, remained for them, to which the exigence of the moment gave more than usual propriety: it was that of running with all possible speed down the steep side of the hill which led immediately to their garden gate.

They set off. Marianne had at first the advantage, but a false step brought her suddenly to the ground; and Margaret, unable to stop herself to assist her, was involuntarily hurried along, and reached the bottom in safety.

A gentleman carrying a gun, with two pointers playing round him, was passing up the hill, and within a few yards of Marianne, when her accident happened. He put down his gun and ran to her assistance. She had raised herself from the ground, but her foot had been twisted in the fall, and she was scarcely able to stand. The gentleman offered his services; and perceiving that her modesty declined what her situation rendered necessary, took her up in his arms, without further delay, and carried her down the hill. Then passing through the garden, the gate of which had been left open by Margaret, he bore her directly into the house, whither Margaret was just arrived, and quitted not his hold till he had seated her in a chair in the parlour.

Elinor and her mother rose up in amazement at their entrance; and while the eyes of both were fixed on him with an evident wonder and a secret admiration which equally sprang from his appearance, he apologised for his intrusion by relating its cause, in a manner so frank and so graceful that his person, which was uncommonly handsome, received additional charms from his voice and expression. Had he been even old, ugly, and vulgar, the gratitude and kindness of Mrs. Dashwood would have been secured by any act of attention to her child; but the influence of youth, beauty, and elegance gave an interest to the action which came home to her feelings.

She thanked him again and again; and with a sweetness of address which always attended her, invited him to be seated. But this he declined, as he was dirty and wet. Mrs. Dashwood then begged to know to whom she was obliged. His name, he replied, was Willoughby, and his present home was at Allenham, from whence he hoped she would allow him the honour of calling to-morrow to inquire after Miss Dashwood. The honour was readily granted, and then he departed, to make himself still more interesting, in the midst of a heavy rain.

Sir John called on them as soon as the next interval of fair weather that morning allowed him to get out of doors; and Marianne's accident being related to him, he was eagerly asked whether he knew any gentleman of the name of Willoughby at Allenham.

"Willoughby?" cried Sir John; "what! is *he* in the country? That is good news, however. I will ride over to-morrow, and ask him to dinner on Thursday."

"You know him, then," said Mrs. Dashwood.

"Know him! to be sure I do. Why, he is down here every year."

"And what sort of a young man is he?"

"As good a kind of fellow as ever lived, I assure you. A very decent shot, and there is not a bolder rider in England."

"And is *that* all you can say for him?" cried Marianne indignantly. "But what are his manners on more intimate acquaintance? what his pursuits, his talents, and genius?"

Sir John was rather puzzled.

"Upon my soul," said he, "I do not know much about him as to all *that*. But he is a pleasant, good-humoured fellow, and has got the nicest little black bitch of a pointer I ever saw. Was she out with him to-day?"

But Marianne could no more satisfy him as to the colour of Mr. Willoughby's pointer than he could describe to her the shades of his mind.

"But who is he?" said Elinor. "Where does he come from? Has he a house at Allenham?"

On this point Sir John could give more certain intelligence, and he told them that Mr. Willoughby had no property of his own in the country; that he resided there only while he was visiting the old lady at Allenham Court, to whom he was related, and whose possessions he was to inherit

"He is as good a sort of fellow, I believe, as ever lived," repeated Sir John. "I remember last Christmas, at a little hop at the Park, he danced from eight o'clock till four without once sitting down."

"Did he, indeed?" cried Marianne, with sparkling eyes; "and with elegance, with spirit?"

"Yes; and he was up again at eight to ride to covert."

"That is what I like; that is what a young man ought to be. Whatever be his pursuits, his eagerness in them should know no moderation, and leave him no sense of fatigue."

"Ay, ay, I see how it will be," said Sir John—"I see how it will be. You will be setting your cap at him now, and never think of poor Brandon."

"That is an expression, Sir John," said Marianne warmly, "which I particularly dislike. I abhor every commonplace phrase by which wit is intended; and 'setting one's cap at a man,' or 'making a conquest,' are the most odious of all. Their tendency is gross and illiberal; and if their construction could ever be deemed clever, time has long ago destroyed all its ingenuity."

Sir John did not much understand this reproof; but he laughed as heartily as if he did, and then replied,—

"Ay, you will make conquests enough, I dare say, one way or other. Poor Brandon! he is quite smitten already; and he is very well worth setting your cap at, I can tell you, in spite of all this tumbling about and spraining of ankles."

CHAPTER X

MARIANNE'S preserver, as Margaret, with more elegance than precision, styled Willoughby, called at the cottage early the next morning, to make his personal inquiries. He was received by Mrs. Dashwood with more than politeness—with a kindness which Sir John's account of him and her own gratitude prompted; and everything that passed during the visit tended to assure him of the sense, elegance, mutual affection, and domestic comfort of the family to whom accident had now introduced him. Of their personal charms he had not required a second interview to be convinced.

"Well, Marianne," said Elinor, as soon as he had left them, "for *one* morning I think you have done pretty well. You have already ascertained Mr. Willoughby's opinion in almost every matter of importance. You know what he thinks of Cowper and Scott—you are certain of his estimating their beauties as he ought—and you have received every assurance of his admiring Pope no more than is proper. But how is your acquaintance to be long supported, under such extraordinary dispatch of every subject for discourse? You will soon have exhausted each favourite topic. Another meeting will suffice to explain his sentiments on picturesque beauty, and second marriages, and then you can have nothing further to ask."

Willoughby, on his side, gave every proof of his pleasure in their acquaintance which an evident wish of improving it could offer. He came to them every day. To inquire after Marianne was at first his excuse; but the encouragement of his reception, to which every day gave greater kindness, made such an excuse unnecessary before it had ceased to be possible, by Marianne's perfect recovery.

His society became gradually her most exquisite enjoyment. They read, they talked, they sang together; his musical talents were considerable; and he read with all the sensibility and spirit which Edward had unfortunately wanted.

CHAPTER XI

Little had Mrs. Dashwood or her daughters imagined, when they first came into Devonshire, that so many engagements would arise to occupy their time as shortly presented themselves, or that they should have such frequent invitations and such constant visitors as to leave them little leisure for serious employment. Yet such was the case. When Marianne was recovered, the schemes of amusement at home and abroad, which Sir John had been previously forming, were put in execution. The private balls at the Park then began: and parties on the water were made and accomplished as often as a showery October would allow. In every meeting of the kind Willoughby was included; and the ease and familiarity which naturally attended these parties were exactly calculated to give increasing intimacy to his acquaintance with the Dashwoods, to afford him opportunity of witnessing the excellencies of Marianne, of marking his animated admiration of her, and of receiving, in her behaviour to himself, the most pointed assurance of her affection.

Elinor could not be surprised at their attachment. She only wished that it were less openly shown, and once or twice did venture to suggest the propriety of some self-command to Marianne. But Marianne abhorred all

concealment where no real disgrace could attend unreserve ; and to aim at the restraint of sentiments which were not in themselves illaudable appeared to her not merely an unnecessary effort, but a disgraceful subjection of reason to commonplace and mistaken notions. Willoughby thought the same ; and their behaviour, at all times, was an illustration of their opinions.

When he was present she had no eyes for any one else. Everything he did was right. Everything he said was clever. If their evenings at the Park were concluded with cards, he cheated himself and all the rest of the party to get her a good hand. If dancing formed the amusement of the night, they were partners for half the time ; and when obliged to separate for a couple of dances, were careful to stand together, and scarcely spoke a word to anybody else. Such conduct made them, of course, most exceedingly laughed at ; but ridicule could not shame, and seemed hardly to provoke them.

CHAPTER XII

As Elinor and Marianne were walking together, the latter communicated a piece of news to her sister, which, in spite of all that she knew before of Marianne's imprudence and want of thought, surprised her by its extravagant testimony of both. Marianne told her, with the greatest delight, that Willoughby had given her a horse—one that he had bred himself on his estate in Somersetshire, and which was exactly calculated to carry a woman.

"He intends to send his groom into Somersetshire immediately for it," she added, "and when it arrives we will ride every day. You shall share its use with me. Imagine to yourself, my dear Elinor, the delight of a gallop on some of these downs."

Most unwilling was she to awaken from such a dream of felicity to comprehend all the unhappy truths which attended the affair, and for some time she refused to submit to them. As to an additional servant, the expense would be a trifle; mamma, she was sure, would never object to it; and any horse would do for *him*—he might always get one at the Park. As to a stable, the merest shed would be sufficient. Elinor then ventured to doubt the propriety of her receiving such a present from a man so little, or at least so lately, known to her. This was too much.

"You are mistaken, Elinor," said she warmly, "in supposing I know very little of Willoughby. I have not known him long, indeed, but I am much better acquainted with him than I am with any other creature in the world, except yourself and mamma. It is not time or opportunity that is to determine intimacy; it is disposition alone."

Elinor thought it wisest to touch that point no more. She knew her sister's temper. But by an appeal to her affection for her mother, by representing the inconveniences which that indulgent mother must draw on herself, if she consented to this increase of establishment, Marianne was shortly subdued; and she promised not to tempt her mother to such imprudent kindness by mentioning the offer, and to tell Willoughby when she saw him next that it must be declined.

She was faithful to her word; and when Willoughby called at the cottage the same day, Elinor heard her express her disappointment to him in a low voice on being obliged to forgo the acceptance of his present. His concern was very apparent; and after expressing it with earnestness, he added, in the same low voice, "But, Marianne, the horse is still yours, though you cannot use it now. I shall keep it only till you can claim it. When you leave Barton to form your own establishment in a more lasting home, Queen Mab shall receive you."

This was all overheard by Miss Dashwood; and in the whole of the sentence, in his manner of pronouncing it, and in his addressing her sister by her Christian name alone, she instantly saw an intimacy so decided, a meaning so direct, as marked a perfect agreement between

them. From that moment she doubted not of their being engaged to each other; and the belief of it created no other surprise than that she, or any of their friends, should be left, by tempers so frank, to discover it by accident.

Margaret related something to her the next day which placed this matter in a still clearer light. Willoughby had spent the preceding evening with them; and Margaret, by being left some time in the parlour with only him and Marianne, had had opportunity for observations, which, with a most important face, she communicated to her eldest sister, when they were next by themselves.

"O Elinor!" she cried, "I have such a secret to tell you about Marianne. I am sure she will be married to Mr. Willoughby very soon."

"You have said so," replied Elinor, "almost every day since they first met on Highchurch Down; and they had not known each other a week, I believe, before you were certain that Marianne wore his picture round her neck; but it turned out to be only the miniature of our great-uncle."

"But, indeed, this is quite another thing. I am sure they will be married very soon, for he has got a lock of her hair."

"Take care, Margaret. It may be only the hair of some great-uncle of his."

"But, indeed, Elinor, it is Marianne's. I am almost sure it is, for I saw him cut it off. Last night, after tea, when you and mamma went out of the room, they were whispering and talking together as fast as could be, and he seemed to be begging something of her; and presently he took up her scissors and cut off a long lock of her hair,

for it was all tumbled down her back; and he kissed it, and folded it up in a piece of white paper, and put it into his pocket-book."

From such particulars, stated on such authority, Elinor could not withhold her credit; nor was she disposed to it, for the circumstance was in perfect unison with what she had heard and seen herself.

A party was formed for going on the following day to see a very fine place about twelve miles from Barton, belonging to a brother-in-law of Colonel Brandon, without whose interest it could not be seen, as the proprietor, who was then abroad, had left strict orders on that head. The grounds were declared to be highly beautiful; and Sir John, who was particularly warm in their praise, might be allowed to be a tolerable judge, for he had formed parties to visit them at least twice every summer for the last ten years. They contained a noble piece of water—a sail on which was to form a great part of the morning's amusement; cold provisions were to be taken, open carriages only to be employed, and everything conducted in the usual style of a complete party of pleasure.

To some few of the company it appeared rather a bold undertaking, considering the time of year, and that it had rained every day for the last fortnight; and Mrs. Dashwood, who had already a cold, was persuaded by Elinor to stay at home.

CHAPTER XIII

Their intended excursion to Whitwell turned out very differently from what Elinor had expected. She was prepared to be wet through, fatigued, and frightened; but the event was still more unfortunate, for they did not go at all.

By ten o'clock the whole party were assembled at the Park.

While they were at breakfast the letters were brought in. Among the rest there was one for Colonel Brandon. He took it, looked at the direction, changed colour, and immediately left the room.

"What is the matter with Brandon?" said Sir John. Nobody could tell.

"I hope he has had no bad news," said Lady Middleton. "It must be something extraordinary that could make Colonel Brandon leave my breakfast-table so suddenly."

In about five minutes he returned.

"I am particularly sorry, ma'am," said he, addressing Lady Middleton, "that I should receive this letter today, for it is on business which requires my immediate attendance in town."

"In town!" cried Mrs. Jennings. "What can you have to do in town at this time of year?"

"My own loss is great," he continued, "in being obliged to leave so agreeable a party; but I am the more concerned, as I fear my presence is necessary to gain your admittance at Whitwell."

What a blow upon them all was this!

"But if you write a note to the housekeeper, Mr. Brandon," said Marianne eagerly, "will it not be sufficient?"

He shook his head.

"We must go," said Sir John. "It shall not be put off when we are so near it. You cannot go to town till to-morrow, Brandon—that is all."

"I wish it could be so easily settled. But it is not in my power to delay my journey for one day."

"If you would but let us know what your business is," said Mrs. Jennings, "we might see whether it could be put off or not."

"You would not be six hours later," said Willoughby, "if you were to defer your journey till our return."

"I cannot afford to lose *one* hour."

Elinor then heard Willoughby say, in a low voice to Marianne, "There are some people who cannot bear a party of pleasure. Brandon is one of them. He was afraid of catching cold, I dare say, and invented this trick for getting out of it. I would lay fifty guineas the letter was of his own writing."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Marianne.

"There is no persuading you to change your mind, Brandon, I know of old," said Sir John, "when once you are determined on anything. But, however, I hope you will think better of it. Consider—here are the two Miss Careys come over from Newton, the three Miss Dash-

woods walked up from the cottage, and Mr. Willoughby got up two hours before his usual time, on purpose to go to Whitwell."

Colonel Brandon again repeated his sorrow at being the cause of disappointing the party, but at the same time declared it to be unavoidable.

He then took leave of the whole party.

Sir John joined most heartily in the general regret on so unfortunate an event, concluding, however, by observing that, as they were all got together, they must do something by way of being happy; and after some consultation it was agreed that, although happiness could only be enjoyed at Whitwell, they might procure a tolerable composure of mind by driving about the country. The carriages were then ordered; Willoughby's was first, and Marianne never looked happier than when she got into it. He drove through the Park very fast, and they were soon out of sight; and nothing more of them was seen till their return, which did not happen till after the return of all the rest.

It was settled that there should be a dance in the evening, and that everybody should be extremely merry all day long. Some more of the Careys came to dinner; and they had the pleasure of sitting down nearly twenty at table, which Sir John observed with great contentment. Willoughby took his usual place between the two elder Miss Dashwoods. Mrs. Jennings sat on Elinor's right hand; and they had not been long seated before she leaned behind her and Willoughby, and said to Marianne, loud enough for them both to hear, "I have found you out in spite of all your tricks. I know where you spent the morning."

"I have found you out in spite of all your tricks."

Marianne coloured, and replied very hastily, "Where, pray?"

"Did not you know," said Willoughby, "that we had been out in my curricle?"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Impudence, I know that very well, and I was determined to find out where you had been to. I hope you like your house, Miss Marianne. It is a very large one, I know; and when I come to see you, I hope you will have new furnished it, for it wanted it very much when I was there six years ago."

Marianne turned away in great confusion, Mrs. Jennings laughed heartily; and Elinor found that in her resolution to know where they had been, she had actually made her own woman inquire of Mr. Willoughby's groom; and that she had by that method been informed that they had gone to Allenham, and spent a considerable time there walking about the garden, and going all over the house.

Elinor could hardly believe this to be true, as it seemed very unlikely that Willoughby should propose, or Marianne consent, to enter the house while Mrs. Smith was in it, with whom Marianne had not the smallest acquaintance.

As soon as they left the dining-room, Elinor inquired of her about it; and great was her surprise when she found that every circumstance related by Mrs. Jennings was perfectly true. Marianne was quite angry with her for doubting it.

"Why should you imagine, Elinor, that we did not go there, or that we did not see the house? Is not it what you have often wished to do yourself?"

"Yes, Marianne, but I would not go while Mrs. Smith

was there, and with no other companion than Mr. Willoughby."

"Mr. Willoughby, however, is the only person who can have a right to show that house; and as he went in an open carriage, it was impossible to have any other companion. I never spent a pleasanter morning in my life."

"I am afraid," replied Elinor, "that the pleasantness of an employment does not always evince its propriety."

"On the contrary, nothing can be a stronger proof of it, Elinor; for if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure."

"But, my dear Marianne, as it has already exposed you to some very impertinent remarks, do you not now begin to doubt the discretion of your own conduct?"

"If the impertinent remarks of Mrs. Jennings are to be the proof of impropriety in conduct, we are all offending every moment of our lives. I value not her censure any more than I should do her commendation. I am not sensible of having done anything wrong in walking over Mrs. Smith's grounds, or in seeing her house. They will one day be Mr. Willoughby's, and——"

"If they were one day to be your own, Marianne, you would not be justified in what you have done."

CHAPTER XIV

The sudden termination of Colonel Brandon's visit at the Park, with his steadiness in concealing its cause, filled the mind and raised the wonder of Mrs. Jennings for two or three days: she was a great wonderer, as every one must be who takes a very lively interest in all the comings and goings of all their acquaintance.

Elinor, though she felt really interested in the welfare of Colonel Brandon, could not bestow all the wonder on his going so suddenly away which Mrs. Jennings was desirous of her feeling; for, besides that the circumstance did not, in her opinion, justify such lasting amazement or variety of speculation, her wonder was otherwise disposed of. It was engrossed, by the extraordinary silence of her sister and Willoughby on the subject which they must know to be peculiarly interesting to them all. As this silence continued, every day made it appear more strange and more incompatible with the disposition of both. Why they should not openly acknowledge to her mother and herself what their constant behaviour to each other declared to have taken place, Elinor could not imagine.

One evening in particular, about a week after Colonel Brandon had left the country, Willoughby's heart seemed more than usually open to every feeling of attachment to

the objects around him; and on Mrs. Dashwood's happening to mention her design of improving the cottage in the spring, he warmly opposed every alteration of a place which affection had established as perfect with him.

"What!" he exclaimed, "improve this dear cottage! No. *That* I will never consent to. Not a stone must be added to its walls, not an inch to its size, if my feelings are regarded."

"Do not be alarmed," said Miss Dashwood; "nothing of the kind will be done; for my mother will never have money enough to attempt it."

"I am heartily glad of it," he cried. "May she always be poor, if she can employ her riches no better!"

"Thank you, Willoughby. But you may be assured that I would not sacrifice one sentiment of local attachment of yours, or of any one whom I loved, for all the improvements in the world. Depend upon it that whatever unemployed sum may remain, when I make up my accounts in the spring, I would even rather lay it uselessly by than dispose of it in a manner so painful to you. But are you really so attached to this place as to see no defect in it?"

"I am," said he. "To me it is faultless. Nay, more: I consider it as the only form of building in which happiness is attainable; and were I rich enough I would instantly pull Combe down, and build it up again in the exact plan of this cottage."

"With dark narrow stairs, and a kitchen that smokes, I suppose," said Elinor.

"Yes," cried he, in the same eager tone, "with all and everything belonging to it; in no one convenience or inconvenience about it should the least variation be

perceptible. Then and then only, under such a roof, I might perhaps be as happy at Combe as I have been at Barton."

"I flatter myself," replied Elinor, "that even under the disadvantage of better rooms and a broader staircase, you will hereafter find your own house as faultless as you now do this."

"There certainly are circumstances," said Willoughby, "which might greatly endear it to me; but this place will always have one claim on my affection which no other can possibly share."

Mrs. Dashwood looked with pleasure at Marianne, whose fine eyes were fixed so expressively on Willoughby as plainly denoted how well she understood him.

"Shall we see you to-morrow to dinner?" said Mrs. Dashwood. when he was leaving them. "I do not ask you to come in the morning, for we must walk to the Park, to call on Lady Middleton."

He engaged to be with them by four o'clock.

CHAPTER XV

Mrs. Dashwood's visit to Lady Middleton took place the next day, and two of her daughters went with her; but Marianne excused herself from being of the party, under some trifling pretext of employment: and her mother, who concluded that a promise had been made by Willoughby the night before of calling on her while they were absent, was perfectly satisfied with her remaining at home.

On their return from the Park they found Willoughby's curricle and servant waiting at the cottage, and Mrs. Dashwood was convinced that her conjecture had been just. So far it was all as she had foreseen: but on entering the house she beheld what no foresight had taught her to expect. They were no sooner in the passage than Marianne came hastily out of the parlour, apparently in violent affliction, with her handkerchief at her eyes, and, without noticing them, ran upstairs. Surprised and alarmed, they proceeded directly into the room she had just quitted, where they found only Willoughby, who was leaning against the mantelpiece with his back towards them. He turned round on their coming in, and his countenance showed that he strongly partook of the emotion which overpowered Marianne.

"Is anything the matter with her?" cried Mrs. Dashwood as she entered—"is she ill?"

"I hope not," he replied, trying to look cheerful; and with a forced smile presently added, "It is I who may rather expect to be ill, for I am now suffering under a very heavy disappointment."

"Disappointment!"

"Yes, for I am unable to keep my engagement with you. Mrs. Smith has this morning exercised the privilege of riches upon a poor dependent cousin, by sending me on business to London. I have just received my dispatches, and taken my farewell of Allenham; and by way of exhilaration I am now come to take my farewell of you."

"To London! And are you going this morning?"

"Almost this moment."

"This is very unfortunate. But Mrs. Smith must be obliged, and her business will not detain you from us long, I hope?"

He coloured as he replied, "You are very kind; but I have no idea of returning into Devonshire immediately. My visits to Mrs. Smith are never repeated within the twelvemonth."

"And is Mrs. Smith your only friend? Is Allenham the only house in the neighbourhood to which you will be welcome? For shame, Willoughby! Can you wait for an invitation here?"

His colour increased; and with his eyes fixed on the ground, he only replied, "You are too good."

Mrs. Dashwood looked at Elinor with surprise. Elinor felt equal amazement. For a few moments every one was silent. Mrs. Dashwood first spoke.

"I have only to add, my dear Willoughby, that at Barton Cottage you will always be welcome; for I will not press you to return here immediately, because you only can judge how far *that* might be pleasing to Mrs. Smith; and on this head I shall be no more disposed to question your judgment than to doubt your inclination."

"My engagements at present," replied Willoughby confusedly, "are of such a nature—that—I dare not flatter myself——"

He stopped. Mrs. Dashwood was too much astonished to speak, and another pause succeeded. This was broken by Willoughby, who said, with a faint smile, "It is folly to linger in this manner. I will not torment myself any longer by remaining among friends whose society it is impossible for me now to enjoy."

He then hastily took leave of them all, and left the room. They saw him step into his carriage, and in a minute it was out of sight.

Mrs. Dashwood felt too much for speech, and instantly quitted the parlour to give way in solitude to the concern and alarm which this sudden departure occasioned.

Elinor's uneasiness was at least equal to her mother's. She thought of what had just passed with anxiety and distrust. Willoughby's behaviour in taking leave of them, his embarrassment, and affectation of cheerfulness, and, above all, his unwillingness to accept her mother's invitation—a backwardness so unlike a lover, so unlike himself—greatly disturbed her. One moment she feared that no serious design had ever been formed on his side, and the next that some unfortunate quarrel had taken place between him and her sister.

In about half an hour her mother returned, and though her eyes were red, her countenance was not uncheerful.

"Our dear Willoughby is now some miles from Barton, Elinor," said she, as she sat down to work, "and with how heavy a heart does he travel!"

"It is all very strange. So suddenly to be gone! It seems but the work of a moment. And last night he was with us so happy, so cheerful, so affectionate! And now, after only ten minutes' notice—gone, too, without intending to return! Something more than what he owned to us must have happened. He did not speak, he did not behave, like himself. *You* must have seen the difference as well as I. What can it be? Can they have quarrelled? Why else should he have shown such unwillingness to accept your invitation here?"

"It was not inclination that he wanted, Elinor; I could plainly see that. He had not the power of accepting it. I have thought it all over, I assure you, and I can perfectly account for everything that at first seemed strange to me as well as to you."

"Can you, indeed?"

"Yes. I have explained it to myself in the most satisfactory way. I am persuaded that Mrs. Smith suspects his regard for Marianne, disapproves of it, and on that account is eager to get him away; and that the business which she sends him off to transact is invented as an excuse to dismiss him. This is what I believe to have happened. And, after all, what is it you suspect him of?"

"I can hardly tell you myself. But suspicion of

something unpleasant is the inevitable consequence of such an alteration as we have just witnessed in him. It may be proper to conceal their engagement (if they *are* engaged) from Mrs. Smith ; and if that is the case, it must be highly expedient for Willoughby to be but little in Devonshire at present. But this is no excuse for their concealing it from us."

"Concealing it from us! My dear child, do you accuse Willoughby and Marianne of concealment? This is strange indeed, when your eyes have been reproaching them every day for incautiousness."

"I want no proof of their affection," said Elinor, "but of their engagement I do."

"I am perfectly satisfied of both."

"Yet not a syllable has been said to you on the subject by either of them."

They were interrupted by the entrance of Margaret; and Elinor was then at liberty to think over the representations of her mother, to acknowledge the probability of many, and hope for the justice of all.

They saw nothing of Marianne till dinner-time, when she entered the room and took her place at the table without saying a word. Her eyes were red and swollen, and it seemed as if her tears were even then restrained with difficulty. She avoided the looks of them all, could neither eat nor speak; and after some time, on her mother's silently pressing her hand with tender compassion, her small degree of fortitude was quite overcome; she burst into tears, and left the room.

This violent oppression of spirits continued the whole evening. She was without any power, because she was without any desire of command over herself. The

slightest mention of anything relative to Willoughby overpowered her in an instant; and though her family were most anxiously attentive to her comfort, it was impossible for them, if they spoke at all, to keep clear of every subject which her feelings connected with him.

CHAPTER XVI

No letter from Willoughby came, and none seemed expected by Marianne. Her mother was surprised, and Elinor again became uneasy. But Mrs. Dashwood could find explanations, whenever she wanted them, which at least satisfied herself.

It was several days before Willoughby's name was mentioned before Marianne by any of her family. Sir John and Mrs. Jennings, indeed, were not so nice: their witticisms added pain to many a painful hour; but one evening, Mrs. Dashwood, accidentally taking up a volume of Shakespeare, exclaimed,—

"We have never finished *Hamlet*, Marianne; our dear Willoughby went away before we could get through it. We will put it by, that when he comes again—— But it may be months, perhaps, before *that* happens."

"Months!" cried Marianne, with strong surprise. "No, nor many weeks."

Mrs. Dashwood was sorry for what she had said: but it gave Elinor pleasure, as it produced a reply from Marianne so expressive of confidence in Willoughby and knowledge of his intentions.

One morning, about a week after his leaving the country, Marianne was prevailed on to join her sisters in their usual walk, instead of wandering away by her-

self. Beyond the entrance of the valley, a long stretch of the road which they had travelled on first coming to Barton lay before them; and on reaching that point they stopped to look around them, and examine a prospect which formed the distance of their view from the cottage, from a spot which they had never happened to reach in any of their walks before.

Amongst the objects in the scene, they soon discovered an animated one: it was a man on horseback riding towards them. In a few minutes they could distinguish him to be a gentleman; and in a moment afterwards Marianne rapturously exclaimed,—

"It is he—it is indeed! I know it is!" and was hastening to meet him, when Elinor cried out,—

"Indeed, Marianne, I think you are mistaken. It is not Willoughby. The person is not tall enough for him, and has not his air."

"He has, he has," cried Marianne—"I am sure he has—his air, his coat, his horse. I knew how soon he would come."

She walked eagerly on as she spoke; and Elinor to screen Marianne from particularity, as she felt almost certain of its not being Willoughby, quickened her pace and kept up with her. They were soon within thirty yards of the gentleman. Marianne looked again; her heart sank within her; and abruptly turning round, she was hurrying back, when the voices of both her sisters were raised to detain her; a third, almost as well-known as Willoughby's, joined them in begging her to stop, and she turned round with surprise to see and welcome Edward Ferrars.

He was the only person in the world who could at

that moment be forgiven for not being Willoughby—the only one who could have gained a smile from her: but she dispersed her tears to smile on *him*, and in her sister's happiness forgot for a time her own disappointment.

He dismounted, and giving his horse to his servant, walked back with them to Barton, whither he was purposely coming to visit them.

He was welcomed by them all with great cordiality, but especially by Marianne, who showed more warmth of regard in her reception of him than even Elinor herself. To Marianne, indeed, the meeting between Edward and her sister was but a continuation of that unaccountable coldness which she had observed at Norland in their mutual behaviour.

After a short silence which succeeded the first surprise and inquiries of meeting, Marianne asked Edward if he came directly from London. No, he had been in Devonshire a fortnight.

"A fortnight!" she repeated, surprised at his being so long in the same county with Elinor without seeing her before.

He looked rather distressed as he added that he had been staying with some friends near Plymouth.

"Have you an agreeable neighbourhood here? Are the Middletons pleasant people?"

"No, not all," answered Marianne; "we could not be more unfortunately situated."

"Marianne," cried her sister, "how can you say so? How can you be so unjust?—They are a very respectable family, Mr. Ferrars, and towards us have behaved in the friendliest manner.—Have you for-

got, Marianne, how many pleasant days we have owed to them ? "

" No," said Marianne, in a low voice, " nor how many painful moments "

Elinor took no notice of this ; and directing her attention to their visitor, endeavoured to support something like discourse with him, by talking of their present residence, its conveniences, etc., extorting from him occasional questions and remarks. His coldness and reserve mortified her severely ; she was vexed and half angry ; but resolving to regulate her behaviour to him by the past rather than the present, she avoided every appearance of resentment or displeasure, and treated him as she thought he ought to be treated from the family connection.

CHAPTER XVII

ELINOR saw with great uneasiness the low spirits of her friend. His visit afforded her but a very partial satisfaction, while his own enjoyment in it appeared so imperfect. It was evident that he was unhappy: she wished it were equally evident that he still distinguished her by the same affection which once she had felt no doubt of inspiring; but hitherto the continuance of his preference seemed very uncertain.

He joined her and Marianne in the breakfast-room the next morning before the others were down; and Marianne, who was always eager to promote their happiness as far as she could, soon left them to themselves. But before she was half-way upstairs she heard the parlour door open, and turning round, was astonished to see Edward himself come out.

"I am going into the village to see my horses," said he, "as you are not yet ready for breakfast. I shall be back again presently."

* * * * *

Edward returned to them with fresh admiration of the surrounding country: in his walk to the village he had seen many parts of the valley to advantage; and the village itself, in a much higher situation than the cottage, afforded a general view of the whole which had exceed-

ingly pleased him. This was a subject which ensured Marianne's attention ; and she was beginning to describe her own admiration of these scenes, and to question him more minutely on the objects that had particularly struck him, when Edward interrupted her by saying, " You must not inquire too far, Marianne : I shall offend you by my ignorance and want of taste if we come to particulars. You must be satisfied with such admiration as I can honestly give. I know nothing of the picturesque."

" I am afraid it is but too true," said Marianne ; " but why should you boast of it ? "

" I suspect," said Elinor, " that to avoid one kind of affectation, Edward here falls into another. Because he believes many people pretend to more admiration of the beauties of nature than they really feel, and is disgusted with such pretensions, he affects greater indifference and less discrimination in viewing them himself than he possesses. He is fastidious, and will have an affectation of his own."

" It is very true," said Marianne, " that admiration of landscape scenery has become a mere jargon. I detest jargon of every kind ; and sometimes I have kept my feelings to myself, because I could find no language to describe them in but what was worn and hackneyed out of all sense and meaning."

" I am convinced," said Edward, " that you really feel all the delight in a fine prospect which you profess to feel. But, in return, your sister must allow me to feel no more than I profess. I like a fine prospect, but not on picturesque principles. I do not like crooked, twisted, blasted trees. I admire them much more if

they are tall, straight, and flourishing. I do not like ruined, tattered cottages. I am not fond of nettles, or thistles, or heath blossoms. I have more pleasure in a snug farmhouse than a watch-tower, and a troop of tidy, happy villagers please me better than the finest banditti in the world."

Marianne looked with amazement at Edward, with compassion at her sister. Elinor only laughed.

The subject was continued no further; and Marianne remained thoughtfully silent, till a new object suddenly engaged her attention. She was sitting by Edward, and in taking his tea from Mrs. Dashwood, his hand passed so directly before her as to make a ring, with a plait of hair in the centre, very conspicuous on one of his fingers.

"I never saw you wear a ring before, Edward," she cried. "Is that Fanny's hair? I remember her promising to give you some. But I should have thought her hair had been darker."

Marianne spoke inconsiderately what she really felt: but when she saw how much she had pained Edward, her own vexation at her want of thought could not be surpassed by his. He coloured very deeply, and giving a momentary glance at Elinor, replied, "Yes, it is my sister's hair. The setting always casts a different shade on it, you know."

Elinor had met his eye, and looked conscious likewise. That the hair was her own she instantaneously felt as well satisfied as Marianne; the only difference in their conclusions was that, what Marianne considered as a free gift from her sister, Elinor was conscious must have been procured by some theft, or contrivance unknown to herself.

Edward's embarrassment lasted some time, and it ended in an absence of mind still more settled. He was particularly grave the whole morning. Marianne severely censured herself for what she had said ; but her own forgiveness might have been more speedy, had she known how little offence it had given her sister.

CHAPTER XVIII

EDWARD remained a week at the cottage. He was earnestly pressed by Mrs. Dashwood to stay longer; but as if he were bent only on self-mortification, he seemed resolved to be gone when his enjoyment among his friends was at its height. His spirits, during the last two or three days, though still very unequal, were greatly improved: he grew more and more partial to the house and environs, never spoke of going away without a sigh, declared his time to be wholly disengaged, even doubted to what place he should go when he left them; but still, go he must. Never had any week passed so quickly; he could hardly believe it to be gone. He said so repeatedly; other things he said too, which marked the turn of his feelings, and gave the lie to his actions. He had no pleasure at Norland; he detested being in town; but either to Norland or London he must go. He valued their kindness beyond anything, and his greatest happiness was in being with them. Yet he must leave them at the end of a week, in spite of their wishes and his own, and without any restraint on his time.

Elinor placed all that was astonishing in this way of acting to his mother's account; and it was happy for her that he had a mother whose character was so

imperfectly known to her as to be the general excuse for everything strange on the part of her son.

Elinor sat down to her drawing-table as soon as he was out of the house, busily employed herself the whole day, neither sought nor avoided the mention of his name, appeared to interest herself almost as much as ever in the general concerns of the family ; and if, by this conduct, she did not lessen her own grief, it was at least prevented from unnecessary increase, and her mother and sisters were spared much solicitude on her account.

As she sat at her drawing-table, she was roused one morning, soon after Edward's leaving them, by the arrival of company. She happened to be quite alone. The closing of the little gate, at the entrance of the green court in front of the house, drew her eyes to the window and she saw a large party walking up to the door. Amongst them were Sir John and Lady Middleton and Mrs. Jennings, but there were two others, a gentleman and lady, who were quite unknown to her. She was sitting near the window ; and as soon as Sir John perceived her, he left the rest of the party to the ceremony of knocking at the door, and stepping across the turf, obliged her to open the casement to speak to him, though the space was so short between the door and the window as to make it hardly possible to speak at one without being heard at the other.

" Well," said he, " we have brought you some strangers. How do you like them ? "

" Hush ! they will hear you."

" Never mind if they do. It is only the Palmers. Charlotte is very pretty, I can tell you. You may see her if you look this way."

As Elinor was certain of seeing her in a couple of minutes, without taking that liberty, she begged to be excused.

"Where is Marianne? Has she run away because we are come? I see her instrument is open."

"She is walking, I believe."

They were now joined by Mrs. Jennings, who had not patience enough to wait till the door was opened before she told *her* story. She came hallooing to the window. "How do you do, my dear? How does Mrs. Dashwood do? And where are your sisters? What! all alone? You will be glad of a little company to sit with you. I have brought my other son and daughter to see you. Only think of their coming so suddenly!"

Elinor was obliged to turn from her, to receive the rest of the party. Lady Middleton introduced the two strangers, Mrs. Dashwood and Margaret came downstairs at the same time, and they all sat down to look at one another, while Mrs. Jennings continued her story as she walked through the passage into the parlour attended by Sir John.

Mrs. Palmer was several years younger than Lady Middleton, and totally unlike her in every respect. She was short and plump, had a very pretty face, and the finest expression of good-humour in it that could possibly be. Her manners were by no means so elegant as her sister's, but they were much more prepossessing. She came in with a smile, smiled all the time of her visit, except when she laughed, and smiled when she went away. Her husband was a grave-looking young man of five or six and twenty, with an air of more fashion and sense than his wife, but of less willingness to please

or be pleased. He entered the room with a look of self-consequence, slightly bowed to the ladies, without speaking a word, and after briefly surveying them and their apartments, took up a newspaper from the table, and continued to read it as long as he stayed.

Mrs. Palmer, on the contrary, who was strongly endowed by nature with a turn for being uniformly civil and happy, was hardly seated before her admiration of the parlour and everything in it burst forth.

"Well, what a delightful room this is! I never saw anything so charming! Only think, mamma, how it is improved since I was here last!—I always thought it such a sweet place, ma'am"—turning to Mrs. Dashwood—"but you have made it so charming!—Only look, sister, how delightful everything is! How I should like such a house for myself!—Should not you, Mr. Palmer?"

Mr. Palmer made her no answer, and did not even raise his eyes from the newspaper.

"Mr. Palmer does not hear me," said she, laughing; "he never does sometimes; it is so ridiculous."

This was quite a new idea to Mrs. Dashwood; she had never been used to find wit in the inattention of any one, and could not help looking with surprise at them both.

Mrs. Jennings, in the meantime, talked on as loud as she could, and continued her account of their surprise, the evening before, on seeing their friends, without ceasing till everything was told. Mrs. Palmer laughed heartily at the recollection of their astonishment, and everybody agreed, two or three times over, that it had been quite an agreeable surprise.

"Here comes Marianne," cried Sir John. "Now Palmer, you shall see a monstrous pretty girl."

He immediately went into the passage, opened the front door, and ushered her in himself. Mrs. Jennings asked her, as soon as she appeared, if she had not been to Allenham; and Mrs. Palmer laughed so heartily at the question as to show she understood it. Mr. Palmer looked up on her entering the room, stared at her some minutes, and then returned to his newspaper. Mrs. Palmer's eye was now caught by the drawings which hung round the room. She got up to examine them.

"Oh dear, how beautiful these are! Well, how delightful! Do but look, mamma—how sweet! I declare they are quite charming; I could look at them for ever." And then sitting down again, she very soon forgot that there were any such things in the room.

When Lady Middleton rose to go away, Mr. Palmer rose also, laid down the newspaper, stretched himself, and looked at them all around.

"My love, have you been asleep?" said his wife, laughing.

He made her no answer; and only observed, after again examining the room, that it was very low pitched, and that the ceiling was crooked. He then made his bow, and departed with the rest.

CHAPTER XIX

As the Miss Dashwoods entered the drawing-room of the Park the next day at one door, Mrs. Palmer came running in at the other, looking as good-humoured and merry as before. She took them all most affectionately by the hand, and expressed great delight in seeing them again.

"I am so glad to see you!" said she, seating herself between Elinor and Marianne; "for it is so bad a day, I was afraid you might not come, which would be a shocking thing, as we go away again to-morrow. We must go, for the Westons come to us next week, you know. It was quite a sudden thing our coming at all; and I knew nothing of it till the carriage was coming to the door, and then Mr. Palmer asked me if I would go with him to Barton. He is so droll! He never tells me anything! I am so sorry we cannot stay longer; however, we shall meet again in town very soon, I hope."

They were obliged to put an end to such an expectation.

"O my dear Miss Dashwood," said Mrs. Palmer soon afterwards, "I have got such a favour to ask of you and your sister. Will you come and spend some time at Cleveland this Christmas? Now, pray do; it will be quite delightful!—My love," applying to her

husband, "don't you long to have the Miss Dashwoods come to Cleveland?"

"Certainly," he replied, with a sneer; "I came into Devonshire with no other view."

"There, now," said his lady; "you see Mr. Palmer expects you; so you cannot refuse to come."

They both eagerly and resolutely declined her invitation.

"But, indeed, you must and shall come. I am sure you will like it of all things. The Westons will be with us, and it will be quite delightful. You cannot think what a sweet place Cleveland is; and we are so gay now, for Mr. Palmer is always going about the country canvassing against the election, and so many people come to dine with us that I never saw before; it is quite charming! But, poor fellow! it is very fatiguing to him, for he is forced to make everybody like him."

Elinor could hardly keep her countenance as she assented to the hardship of such an obligation.

CHAPTER XX

The Palmers returned to Cleveland the next day, and the two families at Barton were again left to entertain each other. But this did not last long; Elinor had hardly got their last visitors out of her head before Sir John's and Mrs. Jennings' active zeal in the cause of society procured her some other new acquaintance to see and observe.

In a morning's excursion to Exeter they had met with two young ladies whom Mrs. Jennings had the satisfaction of discovering to be her relations, and this was enough for Sir John to invite them directly to the Park as soon as their present engagements at Exeter were over.

The young ladies arrived. Their appearance was by no means ungenteel or unfashionable; their dress was very smart, their manners very civil. They were delighted with the house, and in raptures with the furniture; and they happened to be so doatingly fond of children that Lady Middleton's good opinion was engaged in their favour before they had been an hour at the Park.

With her children they were in continual raptures, extolling their beauty, courting their notice, and humouring all their whims. Fortunately for those who pay their

court through such foibles, a fond mother, though in pursuit of praise for her children the most rapacious of human beings, is likewise the most credulous; her demands are exorbitant, but she will swallow anything; and the excessive affection and endurance of the Miss Steeles towards her offspring were viewed, therefore, by Lady Middleton without the smallest surprise or distrust. She saw with maternal complacency all the impertinent encroachments and mischievous tricks to which her cousins submitted. She saw their sashes untied, their hair pulled about their ears, their work-bags searched, and their knives and scissors stolen away, and felt no doubt of its being a reciprocal enjoyment. It suggested no other surprise than that Elinor and Marianne should sit so composedly by, without claiming a share in what was passing.

"John is in such spirits to-day!" said she, on his taking Miss Steele's pocket-handkerchief and throwing it out of the window—"he is full of monkey tricks."

And soon afterwards, on the second boy's violently pinching one of the same lady's fingers, she fondly observed, "How playful William is!"

"And here is my sweet little Anna-Maria," she added, tenderly caressing a little girl of three years old, who had not made a noise for the last two minutes; "and she is always so gentle and quiet. Never was there such a quiet little thing!"

But unfortunately, in bestowing these embraces, a pin in her ladyship's head-dress slightly scratching the child's neck, produced from this pattern of gentleness such violent screams as could hardly be outdone by any creature professedly noisy. The mother's consternation was

excessive, but it could not surpass the alarm of the Miss Steeles; and everything was done by all three, in so critical an emergency, which affection could suggest, as likely to assuage the agonies of the little sufferer. She was seated in her mother's lap, covered with kisses, her wound bathed with lavender water by one of the Miss Steeles, who was on her knees to attend her, and her mouth stuffed with sugar-plums by the other. With such a reward for her tears, the child was too wise to cease crying. She still screamed and sobbed lustily, kicked her two brothers for offering to touch her, and all their united soothings were ineffectual, till Lady Middleton luckily remembering that in a scene of similar distress last week some apricot marmalade had been successfully applied for a bruised temple, the same remedy was eagerly proposed for this unfortunate scratch, and a slight intermission of screams in the young lady on hearing it gave them reason to hope that it would not be rejected. She was carried out of the room, therefore, in her mother's arms, in quest of this medicine; and as the two boys chose to follow, though earnestly entreated by their mother to stay behind, the four young ladies were left in a quietness which the room had not known for many hours.

CHAPTER XXI

MARIANNE, who had never much toleration for anything like impertinence, vulgarity, inferiority of parts, or even difference of taste from herself, was at this time particularly ill-disposed, from the state of her spirits, to be pleased with the Miss Steeles, or to encourage their advances; and to the invariable coldness of her behaviour towards them, which checked every endeavour at intimacy on their side, Elinor principally attributed that preference of herself which soon became evident in the manners of both, but especially of Lucy, who missed no opportunity of engaging her in conversation, or of striving to improve their acquaintance by an easy and frank communication of her sentiments.

"You will think my question an odd one, I dare say," said Lucy to her one day, as they were walking together from the Park to the cottage; "but, pray, are you personally acquainted with your sister-in-law's mother, Mrs. Ferrars?"

Elinor *did* think the question a very odd one, and her countenance expressed it, as she answered that she had never seen Mrs. Ferrars.

"Indeed!" replied Lucy; "I wonder at that, for I thought you might have seen her at Norland sometimes.

Then, perhaps, you cannot tell me what sort of a woman she is ? "

" No," returned Elinor, cautious of giving her real opinion of Edward's mother, and not very desirous of satisfying what seemed impertinent curiosity ; " I know nothing of her."

" I am sure you think me very strange, for inquiring about her in such a way," said Lucy, eyeing Elinor attentively as she spoke ; " but perhaps there may be reasons —I wish I might venture ; but, however, I hope you will do me the justice of believing that I do not mean to be impertinent."

Elinor made her a civil reply, and they walked on for a few minutes in silence. It was broken by Lucy, who renewed the subject again by saying, with some hesitation,—

" Mrs. Ferrars is certainly nothing to me at present ; but the time *may* come—how soon it will come must depend upon herself—when we may be very intimately connected."

She looked down as she said this, amiably bashful, with only one side glance at her companion to observe its effect on her.

" Good heavens ! " cried Elinor, " what do you mean ? Are you acquainted with Mr. Robert Ferrars ? Can you be ? " And she did not feel much delighted with the idea of such a sister-in-law.

" No," replied Lucy, " not to Mr. *Robert* Ferrars—I never saw him in my life ; but," fixing her eyes upon Elinor, " to his elder brother. Not a soul of all my relations knows of it but Anne, and I never should have mentioned it to you, if I had not felt the greatest

dependence in the world upon your secrecy." She paused.

Elinor for a few moments remained silent. Her astonishment at what she had heard was at first too great for words; but at length, forcing herself to speak, and to speak cautiously, she said, with a calmness of manner which tolerably well concealed her surprise and solicitude—"May I ask if your engagement is of long standing?"

"We have been engaged these four years."

"Four years!"

"Yes."

Elinor, though greatly shocked, still felt unable to believe it.

"I did not know," said she, "that you were even acquainted till the other day."

"Our acquaintance, however, is of many years' date. He was under my uncle's care, you know, a considerable while."

"Your uncle!"

"Yes; Mr. Pratt. Did you never hear him talk of Mr. Pratt?"

"I think I have," replied Elinor, with an exertion of spirits, which increased with her increase of emotion.

"He was four years with my uncle, who lives at Longstaple, near Plymouth. It was there our acquaintance began, for my sister and me was often staying with my uncle, and it was there our engagement was formed, though not till a year later after he had quitted as a pupil: but he was almost always with us afterwards. I was very unwilling to enter into it, as you may imagine, without the knowledge and approbation of his mother: but I

was too young, and loved him too well, to be so prudent as I ought to have been."

"Engaged to Mr. Edward Ferrars! I confess myself so totally surprised at what you tell me that really—I beg your pardon, but surely there must be some mistake of person or name. We cannot mean the same Mr. Ferrars."

"We can mean no other," cried Lucy, smiling. "Mr. Edward Ferrars, the eldest son of Mrs. Ferrars of Park Street, and brother of your sister-in-law, Mrs. John Dashwood, is the person I mean. You must allow that *I* am not likely to be deceived as to the name of the man on whom all my happiness depends."

"It is strange," replied Elinor, in a most painful perplexity, "that I should never have heard him even mention your name."

"No; considering our situation, it was not strange. Our first care has been to keep the matter secret."

She was silent. Elinor's security sank, but her self-command did not sink with it.

"Four years you have been engaged," said she, with a firm voice.

"Yes; and Heaven knows how much longer we may have to wait. Poor Edward! it puts him quite out of heart." Then taking a small miniature from her pocket, she added, "To prevent the possibility of mistake, be so good as to look at this face. It does not do him justice, to be sure, but yet I think you cannot be deceived as to the person it was drew for. I have had it above these three years."

She put it into her hands as she spoke; and when Elinor saw the painting, whatever other doubts her fear

of a too hasty decision or her wish of detecting falsehood might suffer to linger in her mind, she could have none of its being Edward's face. She returned it almost instantly, acknowledging the likeness.

"I have never been able," continued Lucy, "to give him my picture in return, which I am very much vexed at, for he has been always so anxious to get it. I only wonder that I am alive, after what I have suffered for Edward's sake these last four years. Everything in such suspense and uncertainty, and seeing him so seldom! We can hardly meet above twice a year. I am sure I wonder my heart is not quite broke."

Here she took out her handkerchief; but Elinor did not feel very compassionate.

"Writing to each other," said Lucy, "is the only comfort we have in such long separations. Yes, *I* have one other comfort in his picture; but poor Edward has not even *that*. If he had but my picture, he says he should be easy. I gave him a lock of my hair set in a ring when he was at Longstaple last, and that was some comfort to him, he said, but not equal to a picture. Perhaps you noticed the ring when you saw him?"

"I did," said Elinor, with a composure of voice under which was concealed an emotion and distress beyond anything she had ever felt before. She was mortified, shocked, confounded.

Fortunately for her, they had now reached the cottage, and the conversation could be continued no further. After sitting with them a few minutes, the Miss Steeles returned to the Park, and Elinor was then at liberty to think and be wretched.

CHAPTER XXII

However small Elinor's general dependence on Lucy's veracity might be, it was impossible for her, on serious reflection, to suspect it in the present case, where no temptation could be answerable to the folly of inventing a falsehood of such a description. What Lucy had asserted to be true, therefore, Elinor could not, dared not longer doubt; supported as it was, too, on every side by such probabilities and proofs, and contradicted by nothing but her own wishes. Their opportunity of acquaintance in the house of Mr. Pratt was a foundation for the rest, at once indisputable and alarming; and Edward's visit near Plymouth, his melancholy state of mind, his dissatisfaction at his own prospects, his uncertain behaviour towards herself, the intimate knowledge of the Miss Steeles as to Norland and their family connections, which had often surprised her, the picture, the letter, the ring, formed altogether such a body of evidence as overcame every fear of condemning him unfairly, and established as a fact, which no partiality could set aside, his ill-treatment of herself. Her resentment of such behaviour, her indignation at having been its dupe, for a short time made her feel only for herself; but other ideas, other considerations, soon arose. Had Edward been intentionally deceiving her? Had he

feigned a regard for her which he did not feel? Was his engagement to Lucy an engagement of the heart? No; whatever it might once have been, she could not believe it such at present. His affection was all her own. She could not be deceived in that. Her mother, sisters, Fanny, all had been conscious of his regard for her at Norland; it was not an illusion of her own vanity. He certainly loved her. What a softener of the heart was this persuasion! How much could it not tempt her to forgive! He had been blamable, highly blamable, in remaining at Norland after he first felt her influence over him to be more than it ought to be. In that he could not be defended. But if he had injured her, how much more had he injured himself! if her case were pitiable, his was hopeless. His imprudence had made her miserable for a while; but it seemed to have deprived himself of all chance of ever being otherwise. She might in time regain tranquillity; but *he*, what had he to look forward to? Could he ever be tolerably happy with Lucy Steele? Could he, were his affection for herself out of the question, with his integrity, his delicacy, and well-informed mind, be satisfied with a wife like her—illiterate, artful, and selfish?

As these considerations occurred to her in painful succession, she wept for him, more than for herself. Supported by the conviction of having done nothing to merit her present unhappiness, and consoled by the belief that Edward had done nothing to forfeit her esteem, she thought she could even now, under the first smart of the heavy blow, command herself enough to guard every suspicion of the truth from her mother and sisters.

One or two meetings had taken place, without affording

Elinor any chance of engaging Lucy in private, when Sir John called at the cottage one morning, to beg, in the name of charity, that they would all dine with Lady Middleton that day, as he was obliged to attend the club at Exeter, and she would otherwise be quite alone, except her mother and the two Miss Steeles.

The young ladies went, and Lady Middleton was happily preserved from the frightful solitude which had threatened her. The insipidity of the meeting was exactly such as Elinor had expected : it produced not one novelty of thought or expression ; and nothing could be less interesting than the whole of their discourse both in the dining-parlour and drawing-room. To the latter the children accompanied them ; and while they remained there she was too well convinced of the impossibility of engaging Lucy's attention to attempt it. They quitted it only with the removal of the tea-things. The card-table was then placed, and Elinor began to wonder at herself for having ever entertained a hope of finding time for conversation at the Park. They all rose up in preparation for a round game.

" I am glad," said Lady Middleton to Lucy, " you are not going to finish poor little Anna-Maria's basket this evening ; for I am sure it must hurt your eyes to work filigree by candle-light. And we will make the dear little love some amends for her disappointment to-morrow, and then I hope she will not much mind it."

This hint was enough ; Lucy recollected herself instantly, and replied, " Indeed, you are very much mistaken, Lady Middleton. I am only waiting to know whether you can make your party without me, or I should have been at my filigree already. I would not

disappoint the little angel for all the world; and if you want me at the card-table now, I am resolved to finish the basket after supper."

"You are very good; I hope it won't hurt your eyes. Will you ring the bell for some working candles? My poor little girl would be sadly disappointed, I know, if the basket was not finished to-morrow; for though I told her it certainly would not, I am sure she depends upon having it done."

Lucy directly drew her work-table near her, and reseated herself with an alacrity and cheerfulness which seemed to infer that she could taste no greater delight than in making a filigree basket for a spoilt child.

Lady Middleton proposed a rubber of cassino to the others. No one made any objection but Marianne, who, with her usual inattention to the forms of general civility, exclaimed, "Your ladyship will have the goodness to excuse *me;* you know I detest cards. I shall go to the pianoforte; I have not touched it since it was tuned." And without further ceremony she turned away and walked to the instrument.

Lady Middleton looked as if she thanked Heaven that *she* had never made so rude a speech.

"Marianne can never keep long from that instrument, you know, ma'am," said Elinor, endeavouring to smooth away the offence; "and I do not much wonder at it, for it is the very best toned pianoforte I ever heard."

The remaining five were now to draw their cards.

"Perhaps," continued Elinor, "if I should happen to cut out, I may be of some use to Miss Lucy Steele in rolling her papers for her; and there is so much still to be done to the basket that it might be impossible, I think,

for her labour, singly, to finish it this evening. I should like the work exceedingly, if she would allow me a share in it."

Lucy made room for her with ready attention; and the two fair rivals were thus seated, side by side, at the same table, and with the utmost harmony, engaged in forwarding the same work. The pianoforte, at which Marianne, wrapped up in her own music and her own thoughts, had by this time forgotten that anybody was in the room besides herself, was luckily so near them that Miss Dashwood now judged she might safely, under the shelter of its noise, introduce the interesting subject, without any risk of being heard at the card-table.

CHAPTER XXIII

In a firm though cautious tone Elinor thus began,—

"I should be undeserving of the confidence you have honoured me with, if I felt no desire for its continuance, or no further curiosity on its subject. I will not apologise, therefore, for bringing it forward again."

"Thank you," cried Lucy warmly, "for breaking the ice: you have set my heart at ease by it, for I was somehow or other afraid I had offended you by what I told you that Monday."

"Offended me! how could you suppose so? Indeed, I can easily believe that it was a very great relief to you to acknowledge your situation to me, and be assured that you shall never have reason to repent it. Your case is a very unfortunate one: you seem to me to be surrounded with difficulties; and you will have need of all your mutual affection to support you under them. Mr. Ferrars, I believe, is entirely dependent on his mother."

"He has only two thousand pounds of his own: it would be madness to marry upon that; though, for my own part, I could give up every prospect of more without a sigh. I have been always used to a very small income, and could struggle with any poverty for him; but I love him too well to be the selfish means of robbing him,

perhaps, of all that his mother might give him if he married to please her. We must wait—it may be for many years. With almost every other man in the world it would be an alarming prospect ; but Edward's affection and constancy nothing can deprive me of, I know."

" That conviction must be everything to you ; and he is, undoubtedly, supported by the same trust in yours. If the strength of your reciprocal attachment had failed, as between many people, and under many circumstances, it naturally would during a four years' engagement, your situation would have been pitiable indeed."

Lucy here looked up ; but Elinor was careful in guarding her countenance from every expression that could give her words a suspicious tendency.

" Edward's love for me," said Lucy, " has been pretty well put to the test, by our long, very long absence, since we were first engaged, and it has stood the trial so well that I should be unpardonable to doubt it now. I can safely say that he has never gave me one moment's alarm on that account from the first."

Elinor hardly knew whether to smile or sigh at this assertion.

Lucy went on. " I am rather of a jealous temper, too, by nature ; and from our different situations in life, from his being so much more in the world than me, and our continual separation, I was enough inclined for suspicion to have found out the truth in an instant if there had been the slightest alteration in his behaviour to me when we met, or any lowness of spirits that I could not account for, or if he had talked more of one lady than

another, or seemed in any respect less happy at Longstaple than he used to be. I do not mean to say that I am particularly observant or quick-sighted in general, but in such a case I am sure I could not be deceived."

Elinor was soon called to the card-table by the conclusion of the first rubber, and the confidential discourse of the two ladies was, therefore, at an end.

CHAPTER XXIV

Though Mrs. Jennings was in the habit of spending a large portion of the year at the houses of her children and friends, she was not without a settled habitation of her own. Since the death of her husband, who had traded with success in a less elegant part of the town, she had resided every winter in a house in one of the streets near Portman Square. Towards this home she began, on the approach of January, to turn her thoughts ; and thither she one day abruptly, and very unexpectedly by them, asked the elder Miss Dashwoods to accompany her. Elinor, without observing the varying complexion of her sister, and the animated look which spoke no indifference to the plan, immediately gave a grateful but absolute denial for both, in which she believed herself to be speaking their united inclinations. The reason alleged was their determined resolution of not leaving their mother at that time of the year. Mrs. Jennings received the refusal with some surprise, and repeated her invitation immediately.

"O Lord! I am sure your mother can spare you very well; and I *do* beg you will favour me with your company, for I've quite set my heart upon it."

"I have a notion," said Sir John, "that Miss Marianne

would not object to such a scheme if her eldest sister would come into it."

"Nay," cried Mrs. Jennings, "I am sure I shall be monstrous glad of Miss Marianne's company, whether Miss Dashwood will go or not, only the more the merrier, say I; and I thought it would be more comfortable for them to be together, because if they got tired of me they might talk to one another, and laugh at my odd ways behind my back."

"I thank you, ma'am, sincerely thank you," said Marianne, with warmth; "your invitation has ensured my gratitude for ever. But my mother, my dearest, kindest mother."

Mrs. Jennings repeated her assurance that Mrs. Dashwood could spare them perfectly well; and Elinor, who now understood her sister, and saw to what indifference to almost everything else she was carried by her eagerness to be with Willoughby again, made no further direct opposition to the plan, and merely referred it to her mother's decision.

On being informed of the invitation, Mrs. Dashwood cried; "it is exactly what I could wish. Margaret and I shall be as much benefited by it as yourselves. When you and the Middletons are gone, we shall go on so quietly and happily together with our books and our music! You will find Margaret so improved when you come back again!"

After very little further discourse, it was finally settled that the invitation should be accepted.

Their departure took place in the first week in January. The Middletons were to follow in about a week. The Miss Steeles kept their station at the Park, and were to quit it only with the rest of the family.

CHAPTER XXV

They were three days on their journey, and reached town by three o'clock the third day, glad to be released, after such a journey, from the confinement of a carriage, and ready to enjoy all the luxury of a good fire.

The house was handsome and handsomely fitted up; and the young ladies were immediately put in possession of a very comfortable apartment. It had formerly been Charlotte's; and over the mantelpiece still hung a landscape in coloured silks of her performance, in proof of her having spent seven years at a great school in town to some effect.

As dinner was not to be ready in less than two hours from their arrival, Elinor determined to employ the interval in writing to her mother, and sat down for that purpose. In a few moments Marianne did the same. "*I* am writing home, Marianne," said Elinor; "had not you better defer your letter for a day or two?"

"I am *not* going to write to my mother," replied Marianne hastily, and as if wishing to avoid any further inquiry. Elinor said no more; it immediately struck her that she must then be writing to Willoughby, and the conclusion which as instantly followed was that, however mysteriously they might wish to conduct the affair, they must be engaged. This conviction, though

not entirely satisfactory, gave her pleasure, and she continued her letter with greater alacrity.

Marianne could scarcely eat any dinner; and when they afterwards returned to the drawing-room, seemed anxiously listening to the sound of every carriage.

It was a great satisfaction to Elinor that Mrs. Jennings, by being much engaged in her own room, could see little of what was passing. The tea-things were brought in, and already had Marianne been disappointed more than once by a rap at a neighbouring door, when a loud one was suddenly heard which could not be mistaken for one at any other house. Elinor felt secure of its announcing Willoughby's approach, and Marianne, starting up, moved towards the door. Everything was silent; this could not be borne many seconds. She opened the door, advanced a few steps towards the stairs, and after listening half a minute, returned into the room in all the agitation which a conviction of having heard him would naturally produce: in the ecstasy of her feeling at that instant she could not help exclaiming, "O Elinor, it is Willoughby, indeed it is!" and seemed almost ready to throw herself into his arms, when Colonel Brandon appeared.

It was too great a shock to be borne with calmness, and she immediately left the room. Elinor was disappointed too; but at the same time her regard for Colonel Brandon ensured his welcome with her, and she felt particularly hurt that a man so partial to her sister should perceive that she experienced nothing but grief and disappointment in seeing him.

"Is your sister ill?" said he.

Elinor answered in some distress that she was, and

then talked of headaches, low spirits, and over-fatigues, and of everything to which she could decently attribute her sister's behaviour.

He heard her with the most earnest attention; but seeming to recollect himself, said no more on the subject, and began directly to speak of his pleasure at seeing them in London, making the usual inquiries about their journey and the friends they had left behind.

Mrs. Jennings soon came in. "O colonel," said she, with her usual noisy cheerfulness, "I am monstrous glad to see you. But pray how came you to conjure out that I should be in town to-day?"

"I had the pleasure of hearing it at Mr. Palmer's, where I have been dining."

"Oh, you did. Well, and how do they all do at their house? How does Charlotte do?"

"Mrs. Palmer appeared quite well; and I am commissioned to tell you that you will certainly see her to-morrow."

"Ay, to be sure, I thought as much. Well, colonel, I have brought two young ladies with me, you see—that is, you see but one of them now, but there is another somewhere. Your friend Miss Marianne, too, which you will not be sorry to hear."

Elinor now began to make the tea, and Marianne was obliged to appear again.

After her entrance Colonel Brandon became more thoughtful and silent than he had been before, and Mrs. Jennings could not prevail on him to stay long. No other visitor appeared that evening, and the ladies were unanimous in agreeing to go early to bed.

Marianne rose the next morning with recovered spirits

and happy looks. The disappointment of the evening before seemed forgotten in the expectation of what was to happen that day. They had not long finished their breakfast before Mrs. Palmer's barouche stopped at the door, and in a few minutes she came laughing into the room.

"Mr. Palmer will be so happy to see you," said she: "what do you think he said when he heard of your coming with mamma? I forget what it was now, but it was something so droll!"

After an hour or two spent in what her mother called comfortable chat, it was proposed that they should all accompany her to some shops where she had business that morning; to which Mrs. Jennings and Elinor readily consented, as having likewise some purchases to make themselves; and Marianne, though declining it at first, was induced to go likewise.

It was late in the morning before they returned home, and no sooner had they entered the house than Marianne flew eagerly upstairs; and when Elinor followed, she found her turning from the table with a sorrowful countenance which declared that no Willoughby had been there.

CHAPTER XXVI

About a week after their arrival, it became certain that Willoughby was also arrived. His card was on the table when they came in from the morning's drive.

"Good God!" cried Marianne, "he has been here while we were out." Elinor, rejoiced to be assured of his being in London, now ventured to say, "Depend upon it, he will call again to-morrow." But Marianne seemed hardly to hear her, and on Mrs. Jennings's entrance, escaped with the precious card.

This event, while it raised the spirits of Elinor, restored to those of her sister all, and more than all, their former agitation. From this moment her mind was never quiet; the expectation of seeing him every hour of the day made her unfit for anything. She insisted on being left behind the next morning when the others went out.

Elinor's thoughts were full of what might be passing in Berkeley Street during their absence; but a moment's glance at her sister, when they returned, was enough to inform her that Willoughby had paid no second visit there. A note was just then brought in and laid on the table.

"For me?" cried Marianne, stepping hastily forward.

"No, ma'am, for my mistress."

Mrs. Jennings soon appeared, and the note being given her, she read it aloud. It was from Lady Middleton, announcing their arrival in Conduit Street the night before, and requesting the company of her mother and cousins the following evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Palmer were of the party. From the former they received no mark of recognition on their entrance. He looked at them slightly, without seeming to know who they were, and merely nodded to Mrs. Jennings from the other side of the room. Marianne gave one glance round the apartment as she entered: it was enough; *he* was not there; and she sat down, equally ill-disposed to receive or communicate pleasure. After they had been assembled about an hour, Mr. Palmer sauntered towards the Miss Dashwoods, to express his surprise on seeing them in town, though Colonel Brandon had been first informed of their arrival at his house, and he had himself said something very droll on hearing that they were to come.

"I thought you were both in Devonshire," said he.

"Did you?" replied Elinor.

"When do you go back again?"

"I do not know." And thus ended their discourse.

Never had Marianne been so unwilling to dance in her life as she was that evening, and never so much fatigued by the exercise. She complained of it as they returned to Berkeley Street.

"Ay, ay," said Mrs. Jennings, "we know the reason of all that very well: if a certain person, who shall be nameless, had been there, you would not have been a bit tired; and, to say the truth, it was not very pretty

of him not to give you the meeting when he was invited."

"Invited!" cried Marianne.

"So my daughter Middleton told me; for it seems Sir John met him somewhere in the street this morning." Marianne said no more, but looked exceedingly hurt.

About the middle of the day Mrs. Jennings went out by herself on business, and Elinor began her letter directly, while Marianne, too restless for employment, too anxious for conversation, walked from one window to the other, or sat down by the fire in melancholy meditation. Elinor was very earnest in her application to her mother, relating all that had passed, her suspicions of Willoughby's inconstancy, urging her, by every plea of duty and affection, to demand from Marianne an account of her real situation with respect to him.

Her letter was scarcely finished, when a rap foretold a visitor, and Colonel Brandon was announced. Marianne, who had seen him from the window, and who hated company of any kind, left the room before he entered it. He looked more than usually grave; and though expressing satisfaction at finding Miss Dashwood alone, as if he had somewhat in particular to tell her, sat for some time without saying a word. Their silence was broken by his asking her, in a voice of some agitation, when he was to congratulate her on the acquisition of a brother. Elinor was not prepared for such a question; and having no answer ready, was obliged to adopt the simple and common expedient of asking what he meant. He tried to smile as he replied, "Your sister's engagement to Mr. Willoughby is very generally known."

"It cannot be generally known," returned Elinor, "for her own family do not know it."

He looked surprised, and said, "I beg your pardon; I am afraid my inquiry has been impertinent; but I had not supposed any secrecy intended, as they openly correspond, and their marriage is universally talked of."

"How can that be? By whom can you have heard it mentioned?"

"By many: by some of whom you know nothing, by others with whom you are most intimate—Mrs. Jennings, Mrs. Palmer, and the Middletons. Tell me that it is all absolutely resolved on, that any attempt—that, in short, concealment, if concealment be possible, is all that remains."

These words, which conveyed to Elinor a direct avowal of his love for her sister, affected her very much. She was not immediately able to say anything; and even when her spirits were recovered, she debated for a short time on the answer it would be most proper to give. The real state of things between Willoughby and her sister was so little known to herself that, in endeavouring to explain it, she might be as liable to say too much as too little. Yet as she was convinced that Marianne's affection for Willoughby could leave no hope of Colonel Brandon's success, whatever the event of that affection might be, and at the same time wished to shield her conduct from censure, she thought it most prudent and kind, after some consideration, to say more than she really knew or believed. She acknowledged, therefore, that though she had never been informed by themselves of the terms on which they stood with each other, of their mutual affection she had no doubt.

He listened to her with silent attention; and on her ceasing to speak, rose directly from his seat, and after saying in a voice of emotion, "To your sister I wish all imaginable happiness; to Willoughby, that he may endeavour to deserve her," took leave, and went away.

CHAPTER XXVII

Nothing occurred during the next three or four days to make Elinor regret what she had done in applying to her mother; for Willoughby neither came nor wrote. They were engaged about the end of that time to attend Lady Middleton to a party, from which Mrs. Jennings was kept away by the indisposition of her youngest daughter; and for this party Marianne, wholly dispirited, careless of her appearance, and seeming equally indifferent whether she went or stayed, prepared without one look of hope or one expression of pleasure.

They arrived in due time at the place of destination: and as soon as the string of carriages before them would allow, alighted, ascended the stairs, heard their names announced from one landing-place to another in an audible voice, and entered a room splendidly lit up, quite full of company, and insufferably hot.

They had not remained long before Elinor perceived Willoughby, standing within a few yards of them, in earnest conversation with a very fashionable-looking young woman. She soon caught his eye, and he immediately bowed, but without attempting to speak to her, or to approach Marianne, though he could not but see her, and then continued his discourse with the same lady. Elinor turned involuntarily to Marianne, to see

whether it could be unobserved by her. At that moment she first perceived him; and her whole countenance glowing with sudden delight, she would have moved towards him instantly, had not her sister caught hold of her.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, "he is there—he is there! Oh, why does he not look at me? Why cannot I speak to him?"

"Pray, pray be composed," cried Elinor, "and do not betray what you feel to everybody present. Perhaps he has not observed you yet."

This, however, was more than she could believe herself; and to be composed at such a moment was not only beyond the reach of Marianne—it was beyond her wish. She sat in an agony of impatience which affected every feature.

At last he turned round again and regarded them both. She started up, and pronouncing his name in a tone of affection, held out her hand to him. He approached; and addressing himself rather to Elinor than Marianne, as if wishing to avoid her eye, and determined not to observe her attitude, inquired, in a hurried manner, after Mrs. Dashwood, and asked how long they had been in town. Elinor was robbed of all presence of mind by such an address, and was unable to say a word. But the feelings of her sister were instantly expressed. Her face was crimsoned over, and she exclaimed, in a voice of the greatest emotion, "Good God! Willoughby, what is the meaning of this? Have you not received my letters? Will you not shake hands with me?"

He could not then avoid it; but her touch seemed painful to him, and he held her hand only for a moment.

"I did myself the honour of calling in Berkeley Street last Tuesday, and very much regretted that I was not fortunate enough to find yourselves and Mrs. Jennings at home. My card was not lost, I hope."

"But have you not received my notes?" cried Marianne, in the wildest anxiety. "Here is some mistake. I am sure—some dreadful mistake. What can be the meaning of it? Tell me, Willoughby—for Heaven's sake, tell me; what is the matter?"

He made no reply: his complexion changed, and all his embarrassment returned; but as if, on catching the eye of the young lady with whom he had been previously talking, he felt the necessity of instant exertion, he recovered himself again, and after saying, "Yes, I had the pleasure of receiving the information of your arrival in town, which you were so good as to send me," turned hastily away with a slight bow, and joined his friend.

Marianne, now looking dreadfully white, and unable to stand, sank into her chair; and Elinor, expecting every moment to see her faint, tried to screen her from the observation of others, while reviving her with lavender water.

"Go to him, Elinor," she cried, as soon as she could speak, "and force him to come to me. Tell him I must see him again—must speak to him instantly. I cannot rest; I shall not have a moment's peace till this is explained. Oh, go to him this moment."

"How can that be done? No, my dearest Marianne, you must wait. This is not a place for explanations. Wait only till to-morrow."

With difficulty, however, could she prevent her from following him herself; and to persuade her to check her

agitation was impossible, for Marianne continued incessantly to give way in a low voice to the misery of her feelings, by exclamations of wretchedness. In a short time Elinor saw Willoughby quit the room by the door towards the staircase ; and telling Marianne that he was gone, urged the impossibility of speaking to him again that evening as a fresh argument for her to be calm. She instantly begged her sister would entreat Lady Middleton to take them home, as she was too miserable to stay a minute longer.

Lady Middleton, though in the middle of a rubber, on being informed that Marianne was unwell, was too polite to object for a moment to her wish of going away ; and making over her cards to a friend, they departed as soon as the carriage could be found. Scarcely a word was spoken during their return to Berkeley Street. Marianne was in a silent agony, too much oppressed even for tears ; but as Mrs. Jennings was luckily not come home they could go directly to their own room, where hartshorn restored her a little to herself. She was soon undressed and in bed ; and as she seemed desirous of being alone, her sister then left her, and while she waited the return of Mrs. Jennings, had leisure enough for thinking over the past.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Before the housemaid had lit their fire the next day, or the sun gained any power over a cold, gloomy morning in January, Marianne, only half dressed, was kneeling against one of the window-seats for the sake of all the little light she could command from it, and writing as fast as a continual flow of tears would permit her. In this situation, Elinor, roused from sleep by her agitation and sobs, first perceived her; and after observing her for a few moments with silent anxiety, said, in a tone of the most considerate gentleness,—

"Marianne, may I ask——"

"No, Elinor," she replied, "ask nothing; you will soon know all."

The sort of desperate calmness with which this was said lasted no longer than while she spoke, and the frequent bursts of grief which still obliged her at intervals to withhold her pen were proofs enough of her feeling how more than probable it was that she was writing for the last time to Willoughby.

At breakfast she neither ate nor attempted to eat anything; and Elinor's attention was then all employed, not in urging her, not in pitying her, nor in appearing to regard her, but endeavouring to engage Mrs. Jennings's notice entirely to herself.

As this was a favourite meal with Mrs. Jennings, it lasted a considerable time; and they were just setting themselves after it round the common working table, when a letter was delivered to Marianne, which she eagerly caught from the servant, and turning of a death-like paleness, instantly ran out of the room. Elinor, who saw as plainly by this as if she had seen the direction that it must come from Willoughby, felt immediately such a sickness at heart as made her hardly able to hold up her head, and sat in such a general tremor as made her fear it impossible to escape Mrs. Jennings's notice. That good lady, however, saw only that Marianne had received a letter from Willoughby, which appeared to her a very good joke, and which she treated accordingly, by hoping, with a laugh, that she would find it to her liking.

Elinor, though never less disposed to speak than at that moment, obliged herself to answer, trying to smile, "And have you really, ma'am, talked yourself into a persuasion of my sister's being engaged to Mr. Willoughby? I must beg, therefore, that you will not deceive yourself any longer. I do assure you that nothing would surprise me more than to hear of their being going to be married."

Mrs. Jennings laughed again, but Elinor had not spirits to say more; and eager, at all events, to know what Willoughby had written, hurried away to their room, where, on opening the door, she saw Marianne stretched on the bed, almost choked by grief, one letter in her hand, and two or three others lying by her. Elinor drew near, but without saying a word; and seating herself on the bed, took her hand, kissed her affectionately several times, and then gave way to a burst of tears, which at first was scarcely less violent than Marianne's.

The latter, though unable to speak, seemed to feel all the tenderness of this behaviour; and after some time thus spent in joint affliction, she put all the letters into Elinor's hands, and then, covering her face with her handkerchief, almost screamed with agony. Elinor, who knew that such grief, shocking as it was to witness it, must have its course, watched by her till this excess of suffering had somewhat spent itself, and then turning eagerly to Willoughby's letter, read as follows :—

"Bond Street, *January*.

"My dear Madam,—I have just had the honour of receiving your letter, for which I beg to return my sincere acknowledgments. I am much concerned to find there was anything in my behaviour last night that did not meet your approbation; and though I am quite at a loss to discover in what point I could be so unfortunate as to offend you, I entreat your forgiveness of what I can assure you to have been perfectly unintentional. I shall never reflect on my former acquaintance with your family in Devonshire without the most grateful pleasure, and flatter myself it will not be broken by any mistake or misapprehension of my actions. My esteem for your whole family is very sincere; but if I have been so unfortunate as to give rise to a belief of more than I felt, or meant to express, I shall reproach myself for not having been more guarded in my professions of that esteem. That I should ever have meant more, you will allow to be impossible, when you understand that my affections have been long engaged elsewhere; and it will not be many weeks, I believe, before this engagement is fulfilled. It is with great regret that I obey your commands of

returning the letters with which I have been honoured from you, and the lock of hair which you so obligingly bestowed on me.—I am, dear madam, your most obedient humble servant,

"JOHN WILLOUGHBY."

With what indignation such a letter as this must be read by Miss Dashwood may be imagined.

She paused over it for some time with indignant astonishment, then read it again and again; but every perusal only served to increase her abhorrence of the man.

Marianne could only exclaim, in the anguish of her heart, "O Elinor, I am miserable indeed!" before her voice was entirely lost in sobs.

"You must not talk so, Marianne. Much as you suffer now, think of what you would have suffered if the discovery of his character had been delayed to a later period—if your engagement had been carried on for months and months, as it might have been, before he chose to put an end to it.

"Engagement!" cried Marianne; "there has been no engagement."

"No engagement!"

"No; he is not so unworthy as you believe him. He has broken no faith with me."

"But he told you that he loved you?"

"Yes—no—never absolutely. It was every day implied, but never professedly declared. Sometimes I thought it had been, but it never was."

"Yet you wrote to him?"

"Yes. Could that be wrong, after all that had passed? But I cannot talk."

Elinor said no more, and turning again to the three letters, which now raised a much stronger curiosity than before, directly ran over the contents of all. The first, which was what her sister had sent him on their arrival in town, was to this effect :—

Berkeley Street, *January.*

"How surprised you will be, Willoughby, on receiving this; and I think you will feel something more than surprise when you know that I am in town. An opportunity of coming hither, though with Mrs. Jennings, was a temptation we could not resist. I wish you may receive this in time to come here to-night, but I will not depend on it. At any rate I shall expect you to-morrow. For the present, adieu.

M. D."

Her second note, which had been written on the morning after the dance at the Middletons', was in these words :—

"I cannot express my disappointment in having missed you the day before yesterday, nor my astonishment at not having received any answer to a note which I sent you above a week ago. I have been expecting to hear from you, and still more to see you, every hour of the day. Pray call again as soon as possible, and explain the reason of my having expected this in vain. We were last night at Lady Middleton's, where there was a dance. I have been told that you were asked to be of the party. You must be very much altered, indeed, since we parted, if that could be the case, and you not there. But I will

not suppose this possible, and I hope very soon to receive your personal assurance of its being otherwise.

M. D."

The contents of her last note to him were these :—

"What am I to imagine, Willoughby, by your behaviour last night? Again I demand an explanation of it. I was prepared to meet you with the pleasure which our separation naturally produced—with the familiarity which our intimacy at Barton appeared to me to justify. I was repulsed indeed! I have passed a wretched night in endeavouring to excuse a conduct which can scarcely be called less than insulting; but though I have not yet been able to form any reasonable apology for your behaviour, I am perfectly ready to hear your justification of it. You have perhaps been misinformed, or purposely deceived, in something concerning me, which may have lowered me in your opinion. Tell me what it is; explain the grounds on which you acted, and I shall be satisfied in being able to satisfy you. It would grieve me, indeed, to be obliged to think ill of you; but if I am to learn that you are not what we have hitherto believed you, that your behaviour to me was intended only to deceive, let it be told as soon as possible. My feelings are at present in a state of dreadful indecision; I wish to acquit you, but certainty on either side will be ease to what I now suffer. If your sentiments are no longer what they were, you will return my notes, and the lock of my hair which is in your possession.

M. D."

That such letters, so full of affection and confidence, could have been so answered, Elinor, for Willoughby's

sake, would have been unwilling to believe. But her condemnation of him did not blind her to the impropriety of their having been written at all; and she was silently grieving over the imprudence which had hazarded such unsolicited proofs of tenderness, not warranted by anything preceding, and most severely condemned by the event, when Marianne, perceiving that she had finished the letters, observed to her that they contained nothing but what any one would have written in the same situation.

"I felt myself," she added, "to be as solemnly engaged to him as if the strictest legal covenant had bound us to each other."

"I can believe it," said Elinor; "but unfortunately he did not feel the same."

"He *did* feel the same, Elinor—for weeks and weeks he felt it. I know he did. Whatever may have changed him now I was once as dear to him as my own soul could wish. This lock of hair, which now he can so readily give up, was begged of me with the most earnest supplication. Have you forgot the last evening of our being together at Barton? the morning that we parted too? Can I ever forget his distress? Elinor, I have been cruelly used; but not by Willoughby."

"Dearest Marianne, who but himself? By whom can he have been instigated?"

"By all the world, rather than by his own heart. I could rather believe every creature of my acquaintance leagued together to ruin me in his opinion than believe his nature capable of such cruelty. This woman of whom he writes—whoever she be—or any one, in short, but your own dear self, mamma, and Edward, may have

been so barbarous as to belie me. Beyond you three, is there a creature in the world whom I would not rather suspect of evil than Willoughby, whose heart I know so well ? "

Elinor would not contend, and only replied, " Whoever may have been so detestably your enemy, let them be cheated of their malignant triumph, my dear sister, by seeing how nobly the consciousness of your own innocence and good intentions supports your spirits."

" No, no," cried Marianne ; " misery such as mine has no pride."

" But for my mother's sake and mine——"

" I would do more than for my own. But to appear happy when I am so miserable—oh, who can require it ? "

" O Willoughby, Willoughby, could this be yours ? ' The lock of hair '—repeating it from the letter—' which you so obligingly bestowed on me,'—that is unpardonable. —Willoughby, where was your heart when you wrote those words ? "

Another pause ensued. Marianne was greatly agitated, and it ended thus,—

" Elinor, I must go home. I must go and comfort mamma. Cannot we be gone to-morrow ? "

" To-morrow, Marianne ? "

" Yes ; why should I stay here ? I came only for Willoughby's sake."

" It would be impossible to go to-morrow. We owe Mrs. Jennings much more than civility ; and civility of the commonest kind must prevent such a hasty removal as that."

" Well, then, another day or two, perhaps ; but I cannot stay here long."

Elinor advised her to lie down again, and for a moment she did so; but no attitude could give her ease; and in restless pain of mind and body she moved from one posture to another, till, growing more and more hysterical, her sister could with difficulty keep her on the bed at all, and for some time was fearful of being constrained to call for assistance. Some lavender drops, however, which she was at length persuaded to take, were of use: and from that time till Mrs. Jennings returned she continued on the bed quiet and motionless.

CHAPTER XXIX

Mrs. Jennings came immediately to their room on her return and walked in with a look of real concern.

"How do you do, my dear?" said she, in a voice of great compassion to Marianne, who turned away her face without attempting to answer.—"How is she, Miss Dashwood? Poor thing! she looks very bad. No wonder. Ay, it is but too true. He is to be married very soon—a good-for-nothing fellow! I have no patience with him. Mrs. Taylor told me of it half an hour ago, and she was told it by a particular friend of Miss Grey herself, else I am sure I should not have believed it; and I was almost ready to sink as it was. —Well, poor thing! I won't disturb her any longer, for she had better have her cry out at once and have done with it."

She then went away, walking on tiptoe out of the room, as if she supposed her young friend's affliction could be increased by noise.

Marianne, to the surprise of her sister, determined on dining with them.

When there, though looking most wretchedly, she ate more and was calmer than her sister had expected.

Mrs. Jennings treated her with all the indulgent fondness of a parent towards a favourite child on the last day

of its holidays. Marianne was to have the best place by the fire, was to be tempted to eat by every delicacy in the house, and to be amused by the relation of all the news of the day. Had not Elinor, in the sad countenance of her sister, seen a check to all mirth, she could have been entertained by Mrs. Jennings's endeavours to cure a disappointment in love by a variety of sweetmeats and olives and a good fire. As soon, however, as the consciousness of all this was forced by continual repetition on Marianne, she could stay no longer. With a hasty exclamation of misery, and a sign to her sister not to follow her, she directly got up and hurried out of the room.

"Poor soul!" cried Mrs. Jennings, as soon as she was gone, "how it grieves me to see her! And I declare if she is not gone away without finishing her wine! And the dried cherries too! Lord! nothing seems to do her any good. I am sure if I knew of anything she would like, I would send all over the town for it. Well, it is the oddest thing to me that a man should use such a pretty girl so ill! But when there is plenty of money on one side, and next to none on the other, Lord bless you, they care no more about such things!—What now?" after pausing a moment; "your poor sister is gone to her own room, I suppose, to moan by herself. Is there nothing one can get to comfort her? Well, I shall spirit up the colonel as soon as I can. One shoulder of mutton, you know, drives another down. If we *can* but put Willoughby out of her head!"

"Ay, if we can but do *that*, ma'am," said Elinor, "we shall do very well." And then rising, she went away to join Marianne, whom she found, as she expected, in her

own room, leaning in silent misery over the small remains of a fire, which till Elinor's entrance had been her only light.

"You had better leave me," was all the notice that her sister received from her.

"I will leave you," said Elinor, "if you will go to bed." But this, from the momentary perverseness of impatient suffering, she at first refused to do. Her sister's earnest though gentle persuasion, however, soon softened her to compliance; and Elinor saw her lay her aching head on the pillow, and saw her, as she hoped, in a way to get some quiet rest before she left her.

In the drawing-room, whither she then repaired, she was soon joined by Mrs. Jennings, with a wine-glass full of something in her hand.

"My dear," said she, entering, "I have just recollected that I have some of the finest old Constantia wine in the house that ever was tasted, so I have brought a glass of it for your sister. My poor husband! how fond he was of it! Whenever he had a touch of his old colicky gout, he said it did him more good than anything else in the world. Do take it to your sister."

"Dear ma'am," replied Elinor, smiling at the difference of the complaints for which it was recommended, "how good you are! But I have just left Marianne in bed, and I hope, almost asleep; and as I think nothing will be of so much service to her as rest, if you will give me leave I will drink the wine myself."

Mrs. Jennings, though regretting that she had not been five minutes earlier, was satisfied with the compromise; and Elinor, as she swallowed the chief of it, reflected that, though its good effects on a colicky gout

were at present of little importance to her, its healing powers on a disappointed heart might be as reasonably tried on herself as on her sister.

Colonel Brandon came in while the party were at tea. Mrs. Jennings walked across the room to the tea-table where Elinor presided, and whispered, "The colonel looks as grave as ever, you see: he knows nothing of it; do tell him, my dear."

He shortly afterwards drew a chair close to hers, and with a look which perfectly assured her of his good information, inquired after her sister.

"Marianne is not well," said she. "She has been indisposed all day, and we have persuaded her to go to bed."

"Perhaps, then," he hesitatingly replied, "what I heard this morning may be—there may be more truth in it than I could believe possible at first."

"What did you hear?"

"That a gentleman, whom I had reason to think—in short, that a man whom I *knew* to be engaged—but how shall I tell you? If you know it already, as surely you must, I may be spared."

"You mean," answered Elinor, with forced calmness, "Mr. Willoughby's marriage with Miss Grey. Yes, we *do* know it all. Mr. Willoughby is unfathomable! Where did you hear it?"

"In a stationer's shop in Pall Mall, where I had business. Two ladies were waiting for their carriage, and one of them was giving the other an account of the intended match, in a voice so little attempting concealment that it was impossible for me not to hear all. The name of Willoughby, John Willoughby, frequently re-

peated, first caught my attention; and what followed was a positive assertion that everything was now finally settled respecting his marriage with Miss Grey: it was no longer to be a secret; it would take place even within a few weeks."

"But have you likewise heard that Miss Grey has fifty thousand pounds? In that, if in anything, we may find an explanation."

"It may be so. But Willoughby is capable—at least I think——" He stopped a moment. "And your sister—how did she——"

"Her sufferings have been very severe; I have only to hope that they may be proportionably short. He has been very deceitful! and in some points there seems a hardness of heart about him."

"Ah!" said Colonel Brandon, "there is, indeed! But your sister—she does not consider it quite as you do?"

"You know her disposition, and may believe how eagerly she would still justify him if she could."

He made no answer; and soon afterwards, by the removal of the tea-things and the arrangement of the card parties, the subject was necessarily dropped.

CHAPTER XXX

From a night of more sleep than she had expected Marianne awoke the next morning to the same consciousness of misery in which she had closed her eyes.

Mrs. Jennings left them earlier than usual, for she could not be easy till the Middletons and Palmers were able to grieve as much as herself; and positively refusing Elinor's offered attendance, went out alone for the rest of the morning. Elinor, with a very heavy heart, aware of the pain she was going to communicate, sat down to write her mother an account of what had passed, and entreat her directions for the future: while Marianne, who came into the drawing-room on Mrs. Jennings's going away, remained fixed at the table where Elinor wrote, watching the advancement of her pen, grieving over her for the hardship of such a task, and grieving still more fondly over its effect on her mother.

In this manner they had continued about a quarter of an hour, when Marianne, whose nerves could not then bear any sudden noise, was startled by a rap at the door.

"Who can this be?" cried Elinor. "So early too! I thought we *had* been safe."

Marianne moved to the window.

"It is Colonel Brandon!" said she, with vexation. "We are never safe from *him*."

"He will not come in, as Mrs. Jennings is from home."

"I will not trust to *that*," retreating to her own room. "A man who has nothing to do with his own time has no conscience in his intrusion on that of others."

The event proved her conjecture right, though it was founded on injustice and error: for Colonel Brandon *did* come in; and Elinor, who was convinced that solicitude for Marianne brought him thither, could not forgive her sister for esteeming him so lightly.

"I met Mrs. Jennings in Bond Street," said he, after the first salutation, "and she encouraged me to come on; and I was the more easily encouraged, because I thought it probable that I might find you alone. My object in desiring it, is to be a means of giving comfort; no, I must not say comfort—but conviction, lasting conviction, to your sister's mind. My regard for her, will you allow me to prove it by relating some circumstances which nothing but a *very* sincere regard—I think I am justified—though where so many hours have been spent in convincing myself that I am right, is there not some reason to fear I may be wrong?" He stopped.

"I understand you," said Elinor. "You have something to tell me of Mr. Willoughby that will open his character further. Your telling it will be the greatest act of friendship that can be shown Marianne. Pray, pray, let me hear it."

"You have probably entirely forgotten a conversation between us one evening at Barton Park, in which I alluded to a lady I had once known, as resembling, in some measure, your sister Marianne."

"Indeed," answered Elinor, "I have not forgotten it." He looked pleased by this remembrance, and added,—

"If I am not deceived by the uncertainty, the partiality of tender recollection, there is a very strong resemblance between them, as well in mind as person—the same warmth of heart, the same eagerness of fancy and spirits. This lady was one of my nearest relations, an orphan from her infancy, and under the guardianship of my father. Our ages were nearly the same, and from our earliest years we were playfellows and friends. I cannot remember the time when I did not love Eliza; and my affection for her, as we grew up, was such as, perhaps, judging from my present cheerless gravity, you might think me incapable of having ever felt. Hers for me was, I believe, fervent as the attachment of your sister to Mr. Willoughby, and it was, though from a different cause, no less unfortunate. At seventeen she was lost to me for ever. She was married against her inclination—to my brother. Her fortune was large, and our family estate much encumbered. And this, I fear, is all that can be said for the conduct of one who was at once her uncle and guardian. My brother did not deserve her; he did not even love her; from the first he treated her unkindly. The consequence of this, upon a mind so young, so lively, so inexperienced as Mrs. Brandon's, was but too natural. But can we wonder that, with such a husband to provoke inconstancy, and without a friend to advise or restrain her (for my father lived only a few months after their marriage, and I was with my regiment in the East Indies), she should fall? Had I remained in England, perhaps—but I meant to promote the happiness of both by removing from her for years, and for that purpose had procured my exchange. The shock which her marriage had given me was nothing to what I

felt when I heard about two years afterwards, of her divorce.

"It was nearly three years after this unhappy period before I returned to England. My first care, when I *did* arrive, was, of course, to seek for her; but the search was as fruitless as it was melancholy. At last, however, and after I had been six months in England, I *did* find her. Regard for a former servant of my own, who had since fallen into misfortune, carried me to visit him in a sponging-house, where he was confined for debt; and there, in the same house, under a similar confinement, was my unfortunate sister. So altered—so faded—worn down by acute suffering of every kind! hardly could I believe the melancholy and sickly figure before me to be the remains of the lovely, blooming, healthful girl on whom I had once doted. That she was, to all appearance, in the last stage of a consumption was—yes, in such a situation it was my greatest comfort. Life could do nothing for her, beyond giving time for a better preparation for death; and that was given. I saw her placed in comfortable lodgings, and under proper attendants; I visited her every day during the rest of her short life; I was with her in her last moments.

"But to what does all this lead? I seem to have been distressing you for nothing. She left to my care her only child, a little girl, then about three years old. She loved the child, and had always kept it with her. It was a valued, a precious trust to me; and gladly would I have discharged it in the strictest sense, by watching over her education myself, had the nature of our situations allowed it. But I had no family, no home; and my little Eliza was therefore placed at school. It is now three

years ago (she had just reached her fourteenth year) that I removed her from school, to place her under the care of a very respectable woman residing in Dorsetshire, who had the charge of four or five other girls of about the same time of life ; and for two years I had every reason to be pleased with her situation. But last February she suddenly disappeared. I had allowed her, at her earnest desire, to go to Bath with one of her young friends, who was attending her father there for his health. I knew him to be a very good sort of man, and I thought well of his daughter—better than she deserved ; for, with a most obstinate and ill-judged secrecy, she would tell nothing, would give no clue, though she certainly knew all. He, her father, a well-meaning but not a quick-sighted man, could really, I believe, give no information. In short, I could learn nothing but that she was gone : all the rest, for eight long months, was left to conjecture. What I thought, what I feared, may be imagined ; and what I suffered too."

" Good heavens ! " cried Elinor, " could it be—could Willoughby——"

" The first news that reached me of her," he continued, " came in a letter from herself last October. It was forwarded to me from Delaford, and I received it on the very morning of our intended party to Whitwell ; and this was the reason of my leaving Barton so suddenly, which I am sure must at the time have appeared strange to everybody, and which I believe gave offence to some. Little did Mr. Willoughby imagine, I suppose, when his looks censured me for incivility in breaking up the party, that I was called away to the relief of one whom he had made poor and miserable. He had left the girl in a

situation of the utmost distress, with no creditable home, no help, no friends, ignorant of his address! He had left her, promising to return; he neither returned, nor wrote, nor relieved her."

"This is beyond everything!" exclaimed Elinor.

"His character is now before you—expensive, dissipated, and worse than both. Knowing all this, as I have now known it many weeks, guess what I must have felt on seeing your sister as fond of him as ever, and on being assured that she was to marry him; guess what I must have felt for all your sakes. To suffer you all to be so deceived—to see your sister—but what could I do? I had no hope of interfering with success; and sometimes I thought your sister's influence might yet reclaim him. Use your own discretion in communicating to her what I have told you. You must know best what will be its effect; but had I not seriously and from my heart believed it might be of service, might lessen her regrets, I would not have suffered myself to trouble you with this account of my family afflictions."

Elinor's thanks followed this speech with grateful earnestness.

"I have been more pained," said she, "by her endeavours to acquit him than by all the rest; for it irritates her mind more than the most perfect conviction of his unworthiness can do. Now, though at first she will suffer much, I am sure she will soon become easier. Have you," she continued, after a short silence, "ever seen Mr. Willoughby since you left him at Barton?"

"Yes," he replied gravely, "once I have: one meeting was unavoidable."

Elinor, startled by his manner, looked at him anxiously, saying,—

"What! have you met him to——"

"I could meet him in no other way. When he returned to town, which was within a fortnight after myself, we met by appointment—he to defend, I to punish his conduct. We returned unwounded, and the meeting, therefore, never got abroad."

Elinor sighed over the fancied necessity of this, but to a man and a soldier she presumed not to censure it.

Recollecting, soon afterwards, that he was probably dividing Elinor from her sister, he put an end to his visit, receiving from her again the same grateful acknowledgments, and leaving her full of compassion and esteem for him.

CHAPTER XXXI

When the particulars of this conversation were repeated by Miss Dashwood to her sister, she listened to it all with the most steady and submissive attention, made neither objection nor remark, attempted no vindication of Willoughby, and seemed to show by her tears that she felt it to be impossible.

To give the feelings or the language of Mrs. Dashwood on receiving and answering Elinor's letter would be only to give a repetition of what her daughters had already felt and said—of a disappointment hardly less painful than Marianne's, and an indignation even greater than Elinor's.

Against the interest of her own individual comfort, Mrs. Dashwood had determined that it would be better for Marianne to be anywhere at that time than at Barton, where everything within her view would be bringing back the past in the strongest and most afflicting manner, by constantly placing Willoughby before her, such as she had always seen him there. She recommended it to her daughters, therefore, by all means not to shorten their visit to Mrs. Jennings, the length of which, though never exactly fixed, had been expected by all to comprise at least five or six weeks.

She had yet another reason for wishing her children to

remain where they were. A letter from her son-in-law had told her that he and his wife were to be in town before the middle of February, and she judged it right that they should sometimes see their brother.

Marianne had promised to be guided by her mother's opinion, and she submitted to it, therefore, without opposition.

But it was a matter of great consolation to her that what brought evil to herself would bring good to her sister; and Elinor, on the other hand, suspecting that it would not be in her power to avoid Edward entirely, comforted herself by thinking that, though their longer stay would therefore militate against her own happiness, it would be better for Marianne than an immediate return into Devonshire.

Her carefulness in guarding her sister from ever hearing Willoughby's name mentioned was not thrown away. Marianne, though without knowing it herself, reaped all its advantage; for neither Mrs. Jennings, nor Sir John, nor even Mrs. Palmer herself, ever spoke of him before her. Elinor wished that the same forbearance could have extended towards herself, but that was impossible, and she was obliged to listen, day after day, to the indignation of them all.

Sir John could not have thought it possible. "A man of whom he had always had such reason to think well! Such a good-natured fellow! He did not believe there was a bolder rider in England! It was an unaccountable business. He wished him at the devil with all his heart. He would not speak another word to him, meet him where he might, for all the world—no, not if it were to be by the side of Barton covert, and they were kept

waiting for two hours together. Such a scoundrel of a fellow! such a deceitful dog! It was only the last time they met that he had offered him one of Folly's puppies, and this was the end of it!"

Early in February, within a fortnight from the receipt of Willoughby's letter, Elinor had the painful office of informing her sister that he was married.

She received the news with resolute composure—made no observation on it, and at first shed no tears; but after a short time they would burst out, and for the rest of the day she was in a state hardly less pitiable than when she first learned to expect the event.

The Willoughbys left town as soon as they were married; and Elinor now hoped, as there could be no danger of her seeing either of them, to prevail on her sister, who had never yet left the house since the blow first fell, to go out again, by degrees, as she had done before.

About this time the two Miss Steeles, lately arrived at their cousin's house in Bartlett's Buildings, Holborn, presented themselves again before their more grand relations in Conduit and Berkeley Street, and were welcomed by them all with great cordiality.

Elinor only was sorry to see them. Their presence always gave her pain, and she hardly knew how to make a very gracious return to the overpowering delight of Lucy in finding her *still* in town.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Jennings, "and how did you travel?"

"Not in the stage, I assure you," replied Miss Steele, with quick exultation; "we came post all the way, and had a very smart beau to attend us. Dr. Davies was

coming to town, and so we thought we'd join him in a post-chaise; and he behaved very genteelly, and paid ten or twelve shillings more than we did."

"Oh, oh!" cried Mrs. Jennings; "very pretty, indeed! And the doctor is a single man, I warrant you."

"There now," said Miss Steele, affectedly simpering, "everybody laughs at me so about the doctor, and I cannot think why. My cousins say they are sure I have made a conquest; but, for my part, I declare I never think about him from one hour's end to another. 'Lord! here comes your beau, Nancy,' my cousin said t'other day, when she saw him crossing the street to the house. 'My beau, indeed!' said I; 'I cannot think who you mean. The doctor is no beau of mine.'"

"Ay, ay, that is very pretty talking; but it won't do —the doctor is the man, I see."

"No, indeed!" replied her cousin, with affected earnestness, "and I beg you will contradict it if you ever hear it talked of."

Mrs. Jennings directly gave her the gratifying assurance that she certainly would not, and Miss Steele was made completely happy.

CHAPTER XXXII

After some opposition, Marianne yielded to her sister's entreaties, and consented to go out with her and Mrs. Jennings one morning for half an hour. She expressly conditioned, however, for paying no visits, and would do no more than accompany them to Gray's in Sackville Street, where Elinor was carrying on a negotiation for the exchange of a few old-fashioned jewels of her mother.

When they stopped at the door, Mrs. Jennings recollected that there was a lady at the other end of the street on whom she ought to call ; and as she had no business at Gray's, it was resolved that while her young friends transacted theirs she should pay her visit, and return for them.

On ascending the stairs, the Miss Dashwoods found so many people before them in the room, that there was not a person at liberty to attend to their orders ; and they were obliged to wait. All that could be done was to sit down at that end of the counter which seemed to promise the quickest succession ; one gentleman only was standing there, and it is probable that Elinor was not without hopes of exciting his politeness to a quicker dispatch. He was giving orders for a toothpick-case for himself ; and till its size, shape, and ornaments were

determined he had no leisure to bestow any other attention on the two ladies than what was comprised in three or four very broad stares.

At last the affair was decided. The ivory, the gold, and the pearls all received their appointment; and the gentleman, having named the last day on which his existence could be continued without the possession of the toothpick-case, drew on his gloves with leisurely care and bestowing another glance on the Miss Dashwoods, but such a one as seemed rather to demand than express admiration, walked off with a happy air of real conceit and affected indifference.

Elinor lost no time in bringing her business forward, and was on the point of concluding it, when another gentleman presented himself at her side. She turned her eyes towards his face, and found him, with some surprise, to be her brother.

Their affection and pleasure in meeting was just enough to make a very creditable appearance in Mr. Gray's shop. John Dashwood was really far from being sorry to see his sisters again; it rather gave them satisfaction; and his inquiries after their mother were respectful and attentive.

Elinor found that he and Fanny had been in town two days.

"I wished very much to call upon you yesterday," said he; "but it was impossible, for we were obliged to take Harry to see the wild beasts at Exeter Exchange: and we spent the rest of the day with Mrs. Ferrars."

Mr. Dashwood attended them downstairs, was introduced to Mrs. Jennings at the door of her carriage, and repeating his hope of being able to call on them the next day, took leave.

Introduced to Mrs. Jennings.

His visit was duly paid. He came with a pretence at an apology from their sister-in-law for not coming too; "but she was so much engaged with her mother that really she had no leisure for going anywhere." Mrs. Jennings, however, assured him directly that she should not stand upon ceremony, for they were all cousins, or something like it, and she should certainly wait on Mrs. John Dashwood very soon, and bring her sisters to see her.

After staying with them half an hour, he asked Elinor to walk with him to Conduit Street and introduce him to Sir John and Lady Middleton. The weather was remarkably fine, and she readily consented.

They were lucky enough to find Lady Middleton at home, and Sir John came in before their visit ended. Abundance of civilities passed on all sides. Sir John was ready to like anybody, and though Mr. Dashwood did not seem to know much about horses, he soon set him down as a very good-natured fellow; while Lady Middleton saw enough of fashion in his appearance to think his acquaintance worth having; and Mr. Dashwood went away delighted with both.

"I shall have a charming account to carry to Fanny," said he, as he walked back with his sister. "Lady Middleton is really a most elegant woman! such a woman as I am sure Fanny will be glad to know. And Mrs. Jennings, too, an exceedingly well-behaved woman, though not so elegant as her daughter. Your sister need not have any scruple even of visiting *her*, which, to say the truth, has been a little the case, and very naturally; for we only knew that Mrs. Jennings was the widow of a man who had got all his money in a

low way, and Fanny and Mrs. Ferrars were both strongly prepossessed that neither she nor her daughters were such kind of women as Fanny would like to associate with. But now I can carry her a most satisfactory account of both."

CHAPTER XXXIII

Mrs. John Dashwood had so much confidence in her husband's judgment that she waited the very next day both on Mrs. Jennings and her daughter; and her confidence was rewarded by finding even the former, even the woman with whom her sisters were staying, by no means unworthy of notice; and as for Lady Middleton, she found her one of the most charming women in the world.

Lady Middleton was equally pleased with Mrs. Dashwood. There was a kind of cold-hearted selfishness on both sides which mutually attracted them; and they sympathized with each other in an insipid propriety of demeanour and a general want of understanding.

Lucy came very shortly to claim Elinor's compassion on being unable to see Edward, though he had arrived in town with Mr. and Mrs. Dashwood. He dared not come to Bartlett's Buildings for fear of detection; and though their mutual impatience to meet was not to be told, they could do nothing at present but write.

Edward assured them himself of his being in town, within a very short time, by twice calling in Berkeley Street. Twice was his card found on the table when they returned from their morning's engagements. Elinor was pleased that he had called, and still more pleased that she had missed him.

The Dashwoods were so prodigiously delighted with the Middletons that, though not much in the habit of giving anything, they determined to give them a dinner; and soon after their acquaintance began, invited them to dine in Harley Street, where they had taken a very good house for three months. Their sisters and Mrs. Jennings were invited likewise; and John Dashwood was careful to secure Colonel Brandon, who, always glad to be where the Miss Dashwoods were, received his eager civilities with some surprise, but much more pleasure. They were to meet Mrs. Ferrars; but Elinor could not learn whether her sons were to be of the party.

The interest with which she anticipated the party was soon afterwards increased, more powerfully than pleasantly, by her hearing that the Miss Steeles were also to be at it.

So well had they recommended themselves to Lady Middleton, so agreeable had their assiduities made them to her, that though Lucy was certainly not elegant, and her sister not even genteel, she was as ready as Sir John to ask them to spend a week or two in Conduit Street; and it happened to be particularly convenient to the Miss Steeles, as soon as the Dashwoods' invitation was known, that their visit should begin a few days before the party took place.

Mrs. Ferrars was a little, thin woman, upright, even to formality, in her figure, and serious, even to sourness, in her aspect. She was not a woman of many words; for, unlike people in general, she proportioned them to the number of her ideas; and of the few syllables that did escape her, not one fell to the share of Miss Dashwood.

Mrs. Ferrars.

whom she eyed with the spirited determination of disliking her at all events.

Elinor could not *now* be made unhappy by this behaviour. A few months ago it would have hurt her exceedingly ; but it was not in Mrs. Ferrars's power to distress her by it now ; and the difference of her manners to the Miss Steeles—a difference which seemed purposely made to humble her more—only amused her. She could not but smile to see the graciousness of both mother and daughter towards the very person—for Lucy was particularly distinguished—whom of all others, had they known as much as she did, they would have been most anxious to mortify ; while she herself, who had comparatively no power to wound them, sat pointedly slighted by both.

Lucy was all exultation on being so honourably distinguished ; and Miss Steele wanted only to be teased about Dr. Davies to be perfectly happy.

The dinner was a grand one, the servants were numerous, and everything bespoke the mistress's inclination for show, and the master's ability to support it. John Dashwood had not much to say for himself that was worth hearing, and his wife had still less. But there was no peculiar disgrace in this ; for it was very much the case with the chief of their visitors, who almost all laboured under one or other of these disqualifications for being agreeable—want of sense, either natural or improved—want of elegance—want of spirits—or want of temper.

When the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room after dinner, this poverty was particularly evident, for the gentlemen *had* supplied the discourse with some variety —the variety of politics, enclosing land, and breaking

horses—but then it was all over; and one subject only engaged the ladies till coffee came in, which was the comparative heights of Harry Dashwood and Lady Middleton's second son William, who were nearly of the same age.

Had both the children been there, the affair might have been determined too easily by measuring them at once: but as Harry only was present, it was all conjectural assertion on both sides; and everybody had a right to be equally positive in their opinion, and to repeat it over and over again as often as they liked.

The parties stood thus:—

The two mothers, though each really convinced that her own son was the tallest, politely decided in favour of the other. The two grandmothers, with not less partiality, but more sincerity, were equally earnest in support of their own descendant.

Lucy, who was hardly less anxious to please one parent than the other, thought the boys were both remarkably tall for their age, and could not conceive that there could be the smallest difference in the world between them: and Miss Steele, with yet greater address, gave it, as fast as she could, in favour of each.

Elinor, having once delivered her opinion on William's side, by which she offended Mrs. Ferrars, and Fanny still more, did not see the necessity of enforcing it by any further assertion; and Marianne, when called on for hers, offended them all by declaring that she had no opinion to give, as she had never thought about it.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ELINOR's curiosity to see Mrs. Ferrars was satisfied. She had found in her everything that could tend to make a further connection between the families undesirable.

She wondered that Lucy's spirits could be so very much elevated by the civility of Mrs. Ferrars ; that her interest and her vanity should so very much blind her as to make the attention which seemed only paid her because she was *not Elinor* appear a compliment to herself, or to allow her to derive encouragement from a preference only given her because her real situation was unknown. But that it was so had not only been declared by Lucy's eyes at the time, but was declared over again the next morning more openly ; for at her particular desire Lady Middleton set her down in Berkeley Street on the chance of seeing Elinor alone, to tell her how happy she was.

" My dear friend," cried Lucy, as soon as they were by themselves, " I come to talk to you of my happiness. Could anything be so flattering as Mrs. Ferrars's way of treating me yesterday ? "

" She was certainly very civil to you."

" Civil ! Did you see nothing but only civility ? I saw a vast deal more. Such kindness as fell to the share of nobody but me ! No pride, no hauteur, and your sister just the same—all sweetness and affability ! "

Elinor wished to talk of something else, but Lucy still pressed her to own that she had reason for her happiness ; and Elinor was obliged to go on.

" Undoubtedly, if they had known your engagement," said she, " nothing could be more flattering than their treatment of you ; but as that was not the case——"

" I guessed you would say so," replied Lucy quickly. " But there is no reason in the world why Mrs. Ferrars should seem to like me if she did not, and her liking me is everything. You shan't talk me out of my satisfaction. I am sure it will all end well, and there will be no difficulties at all, to what I used to think. Mrs. Ferrars is a charming woman, and so is your sister. They are both delightful women indeed. I wonder I should never hear you say how agreeable Mrs. Dashwood was ! "

To this Elinor had no answer to make, and did not attempt any.

" Are you ill, Miss Dashwood ? You seem low—you don't speak ; sure you an't well."

" I never was in better health."

" I am glad of it with all my heart ; but really you did not look it. I should be so sorry to have *you* ill—you that have been the greatest comfort to me in the world. Heaven knows what I should have done without your friendship."

Elinor tried to make a civil answer, though doubting her own success. But it seemed to satisfy Lucy, for she directly replied,—

" Indeed, I am perfectly convinced of your regard for me, and, next to Edward's love, it is the greatest comfort I have. Poor Edward ! But now there is one good thing : we shall be able to meet, and meet pretty often.

for Lady Middleton's delighted with Mrs. Dashwood; so we shall be a good deal in Harley Street, I dare say. And Edward spends half his time with his sister."

Elinor was prevented from making any reply by the doors being thrown open, the servant's announcing Mr. Ferrars, and Edward's immediately walking in.

It was a very awkward moment, and the countenance of each showed that it was so. They all looked exceedingly foolish; and Edward seemed to have as great an inclination to walk out of the room again as to advance farther into it.

But Elinor would not allow the presence of Lucy, nor the consciousness of some injustice towards herself, to deter her from saying that she was happy to see him, and that she had very much regretted being from home when he called before in Berkeley Street.

Her manners gave some reassurance to Edward, and he had courage enough to sit down; but his embarrassment still exceeded that of the ladies in a proportion which the case rendered reasonable, though his sex might make it rare; for his heart had not the indifference of Lucy's, nor could his conscience have quite the ease of Elinor's.

Lucy, with a demure and settled air, seemed determined to make no contribution to the comfort of the others, and would not say a word; and almost everything that *was* said proceeded from Elinor, who was obliged to volunteer all the information about her mother's health, their coming to town, etc., which Edward ought to have inquired about, but never did.

Her exertions did not stop here; for she soon afterwards felt herself so heroically disposed as to determine,

under pretence of fetching Marianne, to leave the others by themselves; and she loitered away several minutes on the landing-place, before she went to her sister. When that was once done, however, it was time for the raptures of Edward to cease; for Marianne's joy hurried her into the drawing-room immediately. Her pleasure in seeing him was like every other of her feelings, strong in itself, and strongly spoken. She met him with a hand that would be taken, and a voice that expressed the affection of a sister.

"Dear Edward!" she cried, "this is a moment of great happiness! This would almost make amends for everything!"

Edward tried to return her kindness as it deserved, but before such witnesses he dared not say half what he really felt. Again they all sat down, and for a moment or two all were silent; while Marianne was looking with the most speaking tenderness, sometimes at Edward and sometimes at Elinor, regretting only that their delight in each other should be checked by Lucy's unwelcome presence. Edward was the first to speak, and it was to notice Marianne's altered looks, and express his fear of not finding London agree with her.

"Oh, don't think of me!" she replied with spirited earnestness, though her eyes were filled with tears as she spoke—"don't think of *my* health. Elinor is well, you see. That must be enough for us both."

This remark was not calculated to make Edward or Elinor more easy, nor to conciliate the goodwill of Lucy, who looked up at Marianne with no very benignant expression.

"Do you like London?" said Edward, willing to say anything that might introduce another subject.

"Not at all. I expected much pleasure in it, but I have found none. I think, Elinor," she presently added, "we must employ Edward to take care of us in our return to Barton. In a week or two, I suppose, we shall be going; and I trust Edward will not be very unwilling to accept the charge."

Poor Edward muttered something, but what it was nobody knew, not even himself. But Marianne, who saw his agitation, and could easily trace it to whatever cause best pleased herself, was perfectly satisfied, and soon talked of something else.

Edward very soon got up to go away.

"Going so soon!" said Marianne: "my dear Edward, this must not be."

And drawing him a little aside, she whispered her persuasion that Lucy could not stay much longer. But even this encouragement failed, for he would go; and Lucy, who would have outstayed him had his visit lasted two hours, soon afterwards went away.

"What can bring her here so often?" said Marianne, on her leaving them. "Could she not see that we wanted her gone? How teasing to Edward!"

"Why so? We were all his friends, and Lucy has been the longest known to him of any. It is but natural that he should like to see her as well as ourselves."

Marianne looked at her steadily, and said, "You know, Elinor, that this is a kind of talking which I cannot bear. If you only hope to have your assertion contradicted, as I must suppose to be the case, you ought to recollect

that I am the last person in the world to do it. I cannot descend to be tricked out of assurances that are not really wanted."

She then left the room; and Elinor dared not follow her to say more, for, bound as she was by her promise of secrecy to Lucy, she could give no information that would convince Marianne; and, painful as the consequences of her still continuing in an error might be, she was obliged to submit to it.

CHAPTER XXXV

WITHIN a few days after this meeting, the newspapers announced to the world that the lady of Thomas Palmer, Esq., was safely delivered of a son and heir.

This event, highly important to Mrs. Jennings's happiness, produced a temporary alteration in the disposal of her time, and influenced in a like degree the engagements of her young friends : for as she wished to be as much as possible with Charlotte, she went thither every morning as soon as she was dressed, and did not return till late in the evening ; and the Miss Dashwoods, at the particular request of the Middletons, spent the whole of every day in Conduit Street. For their own comfort, they would much rather have remained, at least all the morning, in Mrs. Jennings's house ; but it was not a thing to be urged against the wishes of everybody. Their hours were therefore made over to Lady Middleton and the two Miss Steeles, by whom their company was, in fact, as little valued as it was professedly sought.

Mrs. Jennings thought it a delightful thing for the girls to be together, and generally congratulated her young friends every night on having escaped the company of a stupid old woman so long.

I come now to the relation of a misfortune which about this time befell Mrs. John Dashwood. It so happened

that while her two sisters, with Mrs. Jennings, were first calling on her in Harley Street, another of her acquaintance had dropped in. In the present instance, this last-arrived lady allowed her fancy so far to outrun truth and probability, that on merely hearing the name of the Miss Dashwoods, and understanding them to be Mr. Dashwood's sisters, she immediately concluded them to be staying in Harley Street; and this misconstruction produced, within a day or two afterwards, cards of invitation for them, as well as for their brother and sister, to a small musical party at her house; the consequence of which was that Mrs. John Dashwood was obliged to submit not only to the exceedingly great inconvenience of sending her carriage for the Miss Dashwoods, but, what was still worse, must be subject to all the unpleasantness of appearing to treat them with attention; and who could tell that they might not expect to go out with her a second time?

The events of the evening were not very remarkable. As Elinor was neither musical nor affecting to be so, she made no scruple of turning away her eyes from the grand pianoforte whenever it suited her. In one of these excursive glances she perceived, among a group of young men, the very he who had given a lecture on toothpick-cases at Gray's. She perceived him soon afterwards looking at herself, and speaking familiarly to her brother; and had just determined to find out his name from the latter, when they both came towards her, and Mr. Dashwood introduced him to her as Mr. Robert Ferrars.

He addressed her with easy civility, and twisted his head into a bow, which assured her, as plainly as words

could have done, that he was exactly the coxcomb she had heard him described to be by Lucy. Happy had it been for her if her regard for Edward had depended less on his own merit than on the merit of his nearest relations! Why they *were* different Robert explained to her himself in the course of a quarter of an hour's conversation; for talking of his brother, and lamenting the extreme *gaucherie* which he really believed kept him from mixing in proper society, he candidly and generously attributed it much less to any natural deficiency than to the misfortune of a private education; while he himself, though probably without any particular, any material superiority by nature, merely from the advantage of a public school, was as well fitted to mix in the world as any other man.

"Upon my soul," he added, "I believe it is nothing more; and so I often tell my mother when she is grieving about it. 'My dear madam,' I always say to her, 'you must make yourself easy. The evil is now irremediable, and it has been entirely your own doing. Why would you be persuaded by my uncle, Sir Robert, against your own judgment, to place Edward under private tuition, at the most critical time of his life? If you had only sent him to Westminster as well as myself, instead of sending him to Mr. Pratt's, all this would have been prevented.' This is the way in which I always consider the matter, and my mother is perfectly convinced of her error."

Elinor would not oppose his opinion, because, whatever might be her general estimation of the advantage of a public school, she could not think of Edward's abode in Mr. Pratt's family with any satisfaction.

"You reside in Devonshire, I think," was his next observation, "in a cottage near Dawlish."

Elinor set him right as to its situation, and it seemed rather surprising to him that anybody could live in Devonshire without living near Dawlish. He bestowed his hearty approbation, however, on their species of house.

"For my own part," said he, "I am excessively fond of a cottage; there is always so much comfort, so much elegance about them. And I protest, if I had any money to spare, I should buy a little land and build one myself, within a short distance of London, where I might drive myself down at any time, and collect a few friends about me, and be happy. Some people imagine that there can be no accommodations, no space, in a cottage; but this is all a mistake."

Elinor agreed to it all, for she did not think he deserved the compliment of rational opposition.

As John Dashwood had no more pleasure in music than his eldest sister, his mind was equally at liberty to fix on anything else; and a thought struck him during the evening which he communicated to his wife when they got home. The consideration of Mrs. Dennison's mistake, in supposing his sisters their guests, had suggested the propriety of their being really invited to become such while Mrs. Jennings's engagements kept her from home. The expense would be nothing; and it was altogether an attention which the delicacy of his conscience pointed out to be requisite to its complete enfranchisement from his promise to his father. Fanny was startled at the proposal.

"I do not see how it can be done," said she, "with-

out affronting Lady Middleton, for they spend every day with her. You know I am always ready to pay them any attention in my power, as my taking them out this evening shows. But they are Lady Middleton's visitors; how can I ask them away from her?"

Her husband, but with great humility, did not see the force of her objection. "They had already spent a week in this manner in Conduit Street, and Lady Middleton could not be displeased at their giving the same number of days to such near relations."

Fanny paused a moment, and then, with fresh vigour, said,—

"My love, I would ask them with all my heart, if it was in my power; but I had just settled within myself to ask the Miss Steeles to spend a few days with us. They are very well-behaved, good kind of girls; and I think the attention is due to them, as their uncle did so very well by Edward. We can ask your sisters some other year, you know; but the Miss Steeles may not be in town any more."

Fanny, rejoicing in her escape, and proud of the ready wit that had procured it, wrote the next morning to Lucy, to request her company and her sister's, for some days, in Harley Street, as soon as Lady Middleton could spare them. This was enough to make Lucy really and reasonably happy. Mrs. Dashwood seemed actually working for her herself—cherishing all her hopes, and promoting all her views!

The Miss Steeles removed to Harley Street, and all that reached Elinor of their influence there strengthened her expectation of the event. Sir John, who called on them more than once, brought home such accounts of

the favour they were in as must be universally striking. Mrs. Dashwood had never been so much pleased with any young women in her life as she was with them ; had given each of them a needlebook made by some emigrant ; called Lucy by her Christian name ; and did not know whether she should ever be able to part with them.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Mrs. Palmer was so well at the end of a fortnight that her mother felt it no longer necessary to give up the whole of her time to her; and contenting herself with visiting her once or twice a day, returned for that period to her own home and her own habits, in which she found the Miss Dashwoods very ready to reassume their former share.

About the third or fourth morning after their being thus resettled in Berkeley Street, Mrs. Jennings, on returning from her ordinary visit to Mrs. Palmer, entered the drawing-room, where Elinor was sitting by herself, with an air of such hurrying importance as prepared her to hear something wonderful; and giving her time only to form that idea, began directly to justify it by saying,—

"Lord! my dear Miss Dashwood! have you heard the news?"

"No, ma'am; what is it?"

"Something so strange! But you shall hear it all. When I got to Mr. Palmer's, I found Charlotte quite in a fuss about the child. She was sure it was very ill—it cried, and fretted, and was all over pimples. So I looked at it directly, and, 'Lord! my dear,' says I, 'it is nothing in the world but the red gum;' and nurse said just the same. But Charlotte, she would not be satisfied, so

Mr. Donavan was sent for; and luckily he happened to be just come in from Harley Street, so he stepped over directly, and as soon as ever he saw the child he said just as we did—that it was nothing in the world but the red gum; and then Charlotte was easy. And so, just as he was going away again, it came into my head—I am sure I do not know how I happened to think of it—but it came into my head to ask him if there was any news. So upon that he smirked, and simpered, and looked grave, and seemed to know something or other, and at last he said in a whisper, 'For fear any unpleasant report should reach the young ladies under your care as to their sister's indisposition, I think it advisable to say that I believe there is no great reason for alarm; I hope Mrs. Dashwood will do very well.'"

"What! is Fanny ill?"

"That is exactly what I said, my dear. 'Lord!' says I, 'is Mrs. Dashwood ill?' So then it all came out; and the long and the short of the matter, by all I can learn, seems to be this. Mr. Edward Ferrars, the very young man I used to joke with you about (but, however, as it turns out, I am monstrous glad there never was anything in it)—Mr. Edward Ferrars, it seems, has been engaged above this twelvemonth to my cousin Lucy! And not a creature knowing a syllable of the matter except Nancy! Could you have believed such a thing possible? I never happened to see them together, or I am sure I should have found it out directly. Well, and so this was kept a great secret, for fear of Mrs. Ferrars, and neither she nor your brother or sister suspected a word of the matter; till this very morning poor Nancy, who, you know, is a well-meaning creature, but no con-

jurer, popped it all out. 'Lord!' thinks she to herself, 'they are all so fond of Lucy, to be sure they will make no difficulty about it.' And so away she went to your sister, who was sitting all alone at her carpet-work, little suspecting what was to come; for she had just been saying to your brother, only five minutes before, that she thought to make a match between Edward and some lord's daughter or other, I forget who. So you may think what a blow it was to all her vanity and pride. She fell into violent hysterics immediately, with such screams as reached your brother's ears, as he was sitting in his own dressing-room downstairs, thinking about writing a letter to his steward in the country. So up he flew directly and a terrible scene took place; for Lucy was come to them by that time, little dreaming what was going on. Poor soul! I pity *her*. And I must say, I think she was used very hardly; for your sister scolded like any fury, and soon drove her into a fainting fit. Nancy, she fell upon her knees, and cried bitterly; and your brother, he walked about the room, and said he did not know what to do. Mrs. Dashwood declared they should not stay a minute longer in the house; and your brother was forced to go down upon his knees too, to persuade her to let them stay till they had packed up their clothes. Then she fell into hysterics again, and he was so frightened that he would send for Mr. Donavan, and Mr. Donavan found the house in all this uproar. The carriage was at the door, ready to take my poor cousins away, and they were just stepping in as he came off—poor Lucy in such a condition, he says, she could hardly walk; and Nancy, she was almost as bad. I declare, I have no patience with your sister. I have no notion of people's making such a

to-do about money and greatness. There is no reason on earth why Mr. Edward and Lucy should not marry; though Lucy has next to nothing herself, she knows better than anybody how to make the most of everything. And I dare say, if Mrs. Ferrars would only allow him five hundred a year, she would make as good an appearance with it as anybody else would with eight."

Here Mrs. Jennings ceased; and as Elinor had had time enough to collect her thoughts, she was able to give such an answer, and make such observations, as the subject might naturally be supposed to produce. Happy to find that she was not suspected of any extraordinary interest in it; that Mrs. Jennings (as she had of late often hoped might be the case) had ceased to imagine her at all attached to Edward; and happy, above all the rest, in the absence of Marianne, she felt very well able to speak of the affair without embarrassment, and to give her judgment, as she believed, with impartiality on the conduct of every one concerned in it.

As Mrs. Jennings could talk on no other subject, Elinor soon saw the necessity of preparing Marianne for its discussion.

She was very far from wishing to dwell on her own feelings, or to represent herself as suffering much, any otherwise than as the self-command she had practised since her first knowledge of Edward's engagement might suggest a hint of what was practicable to Marianne. Her narration was clear and simple; and though it could not be given without emotion, it was not accompanied by violent agitation nor impetuous grief. *That* belonged rather to the hearer, for Marianne listened with horror, and cried excessively. Elinor was to be the com-

forter of others in her own distresses no less than in theirs ; and all the comfort that could be given by assurances of her own composure of mind, and a very earnest vindication of Edward from every charge but of imprudence, was readily offered.

But Marianne for some time would give credit to neither. Edward seemed a second Willoughby ; and acknowledging, as Elinor did, that she *had* loved him most sincerely, could she feel less than herself ?

" How long has this been known to you, Elinor ? Has he written to you ? "

" I have known it these four months. When Lucy first came to Barton Park, last November, she told me in confidence of her engagement."

At these words Marianne's eyes expressed the astonishment which her lips could not utter. After a pause of wonder, she exclaimed,—

" Four months ! Have you known of this four months ? "

Elinor confirmed it.

" What ! while attending me in all my misery, has this been on your heart ? And I have reproached you for being happy ! "

" It was not fit that you should then know how much I was the reverse."

" Four months ! " cried Marianne again. " So calm, so cheerful ! How have you been supported ? "

" By feeling that I was doing my duty. My promise to Lucy obliged me to be secret. I owed it to her, therefore, to avoid giving any hint of the truth ; and I owed it to my family and friends not to create in them

a solicitude about me which it could not be in my power to satisfy."

Marianne seemed much struck.

"I have very often wished to undeceive yourself and my mother," added Elinor, "and once or twice I have attempted it; but without betraying my trust I never could have convinced you."

"Four months! And yet you loved him!"

"Yes. But I did not only love him; and while the comfort of others was dear to me, I was glad to spare them from knowing how much I felt. Now I can think and speak of it with little emotion. For four months, Marianne, I have had all this hanging on my mind, without being at liberty to speak of it to a single creature; knowing that it would make you and my mother most unhappy whenever it were explained to you, yet unable to prepare you for it in the least. I have known myself to be divided from Edward for ever, without hearing one circumstance that could make me less desire the connection. Nothing has proved him unworthy; nor has anything declared him indifferent to me. I have had to contend against the unkindness of his sister and the insolence of his mother, and have suffered the punishment of an attachment without enjoying its advantages. And all this has been going on at a time when, as you too well know, it has not been my only unhappiness."

Marianne was quite subdued.

"O Elinor," she cried, "you have made me hate myself for ever. How barbarous have I been to you! —you who have been my only comfort, who have borne with me in all my misery, who have seemed to be only suffering for me!"

In such a frame of mind as she was now in, Elinor had no difficulty in obtaining from her whatever promise she required; and at her request Marianne engaged never to speak of the affair to any one with the least appearance of bitterness, to meet Lucy without betraying the smallest increase of dislike to her, and even to see Edward himself, if chance should bring them together, without any diminution of her usual cordiality.

She performed her promise of being discreet to admiration. She attended to all that Mrs. Jennings had to say upon the subject with an unchanging complexion, dissented from her in nothing, and was heard three times to say, "Yes, ma'am." She listened to her praise of Lucy with only moving from one chair to another; and when Mrs. Jennings talked of Edward's affection, it cost her only a spasm in her throat. Such advances towards heroism in her sister made Elinor feel equal to anything herself.

The next morning brought a further trial of it, in a visit from their brother, who came with a most serious aspect to talk over the dreadful affair, and bring them news of his wife.

"You have heard, I suppose," said he, with great solemnity, as soon as he was seated, "of the very shocking discovery that took place under our roof yesterday."

They all looked their assent; it seemed too awful a moment for speech.

"Your sister," he continued, "has suffered dreadfully; Mrs. Ferrars too—in short, it has been a scene of such complicated distress; but I will hope that the storm may be weathered without our being any of us quite overcome. Poor Fanny! she was in hysterics all

yesterday. But I would not alarm you too much. Donavan says there is nothing materially to be apprehended; her constitution is a good one, and her resolution equal to anything. She has borne it all with the fortitude of an angel! What Mrs. Ferrars suffered is not to be described. We consulted together, however, as to what should be done, and at last she determined to send for Edward. He came. But I am sorry to relate what ensued. All that Mrs. Ferrars could say to make him put an end to the engagement—assisted, too, as you may well suppose, by my arguments and Fanny's entreaties—was of no avail. Duty, affection, everything, was disregarded. I never thought Edward so stubborn, so unfeeling, before. His mother explained to him her liberal designs in case of his marrying Miss Morton; told him she would settle on him the Norfolk estate, which clear of land-tax brings in a good thousand a year; offered even, when matters grew desperate, to make it twelve hundred; and in opposition to this, if he still persisted in this low connection, represented to him the certain penury that must attend the match. Edward said very little, but what he did say was in the most determined manner. Nothing should prevail on him to give up his engagement. He would stand to it, cost him what it might."

"Then," cried Mrs. Jennings, with blunt sincerity, no longer able to be silent, "he has acted like an honest man! I beg your pardon, Mr. Dashwood, but if he had done otherwise, I should have thought him a rascal. I have some little concern in the business as well as yourself, for Lucy Steele is my cousin; and I believe there

is not a better kind of girl in the world, nor one who more deserves a good husband."

John Dashwood was greatly astonished; but his nature was calm, not open to provocation, and he never wished to offend anybody, especially anybody of good fortune. He therefore replied without any resentment,—

"I would by no means speak disrespectfully of any relation of yours, madam. Miss Lucy Steele is, I dare say, a very deserving young woman; but in the present case, you know, the connection must be impossible."

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Jennings, "and how did it end?"

"I am sorry to say, ma'am, in a most unhappy rupture. Edward is dismissed for ever from his mother's notice. He left her house yesterday; but where he is gone, or whether he is still in town, I do not know, for *we*, of course, can make no inquiry."

"Poor young man! and what is to become of him?"

"What, indeed, ma'am! It is a melancholy consideration. Born to the prospect of such affluence! I cannot conceive a situation more deplorable."

"Poor young man!" cried Mrs. Jennings, "I am sure he should be very welcome to bed and board at my house; and so I would tell him if I could see him. It is not fit that he should be living about at his own charge now, at lodgings and taverns."

Elinor's heart thanked her for such kindness towards Edward, though she could not forbear smiling at the form of it.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Mrs. Jennings was very warm in her praise of Edward's conduct, but only Elinor and Marianne understood its true merit. They knew how little he had had to tempt him to be disobedient, and how small was the consolation, beyond the consciousness of doing right, that could remain to him in the loss of friends and fortune. Elinor gloried in his integrity, and Marianne forgave all his offences in compassion for his punishment.

The next morning brought Elinor a letter by the two-penny post from Lucy herself. It was as follows :—

"Bartlett's Buildings, *March*.

"I hope my dear Miss Dashwood will excuse the liberty I take of writing to her ; but I know your friendship for me will make you pleased to hear such a good account of myself and my dear Edward, after all the troubles we have went through lately, therefore will make no more apologies, but proceed to say that, thank God ! though we have suffered dreadfully, we are both quite well now, and as happy as we must always be in one another's love. Our prospects are not very bright to be sure ; but we must wait, and hope for the best. Poor Anne was much to blame for what she did : but she did it for the best, so I say nothing. Hope Mrs. Jennings

won't think it too much trouble to give us a call, should she come this way any morning; 'twould be a great kindness, and my cousins would be proud to know her. My paper reminds me to conclude; and begging to be most gratefully and respectfully remembered to her, and to Sir John and Lady Middleton and the dear children, when you chance to see them, and love to Miss Marianne,

"I am," etc., etc.

As soon as Elinor had finished it, she performed what she concluded to be its writer's real design, by placing it in the hands of Mrs. Jennings, who read it aloud with many comments of satisfaction and praise.

"Very well, indeed! How prettily she writes! She is a good-hearted girl as ever lived. Yes, yes, I will go and see her, sure enough. How attentive she is, to think of everybody! Thank you, my dear, for showing it me."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The Miss Dashwoods had now been rather more than two months in town, and Marianne's impatience to be gone increased every day. The Palmers were to remove to Cleveland about the end of March for the Easter holidays; and Mrs. Jennings, with both her friends, received a very warm invitation from Charlotte to go with them. This would not in itself have been sufficient for the delicacy of Miss Dashwood; but it was enforced with so much real politeness by Mr. Palmer himself as, joined to the very great amendment of his manners towards them since her sister had been known to be unhappy, induced her to accept it with pleasure. From Cleveland the distance to Barton was not beyond one day's journey; and their mother's servant might easily come there to attend them.

Mrs. Jennings was so far from being weary of her guests that she pressed them very earnestly to return with her again from Cleveland. Elinor was grateful for the attention, but it could not alter their design: and their mother's concurrence being readily gained, everything relative to their return was arranged as far as it could be; and Marianne found some relief in drawing up a statement of the hours that were yet to divide her from Barton.

"Ah, colonel, I do not know what you and I shall do without the Miss Dashwoods," was Mrs. Jennings's address to him when he first called on her after their leaving her was settled, "for they are quite resolved upon going home from the Palmers; and how forlorn we shall be when I come back! Lord! we shall sit and gape at one another as dull as two cats."

Perhaps Mrs. Jennings was in hopes, by this vigorous sketch of their future ennui, to provoke him to make that offer which might give himself an escape from it; and if so, she had soon afterwards good reason to think her object gained: for on Elinor's moving to the window to take more expeditiously the dimensions of a print which she was going to copy for her friend, he followed her to it with a look of particular meaning, and conversed with her there for several minutes.

Mrs. Jennings very plainly heard Elinor say, and with a voice which showed her to feel what she said,—

"I shall always think myself very much obliged to you."

Mrs. Jennings was delighted with her gratitude, and only wondered that, after hearing such a sentence, the colonel should be able to take leave of them, as he immediately did, with the utmost *sang-froid*, and go away without making her any reply! She had not thought her old friend could have made so indifferent a suitor.

What had really passed between them was to this effect.

"I have heard," said he, with great compassion, "of the injustice your friend Mr. Ferrars has suffered from his family; for if I understand the matter right, he has been entirely cast off by them for persevering in his

engagement with a very deserving young woman. Have I been rightly informed ? Is it so ? "

Elinor told him that it was.

" The cruelty, the impolitic cruelty," he replied, with great feeling, " of dividing, or attempting to divide, two young people long attached to each other is terrible. Mr. Ferrars is not a young man with whom one can be intimately acquainted in a short time, but I have seen enough of him to wish him well for his own sake, and as a friend of yours I wish it still more. I understand that he intends to take orders. Will you be so good as to tell him that the living of Delaford, now just vacant, is his, if he think it worth his acceptance ? It is a rectory, but a small one—the late incumbent, I believe, did not make more than £200 per annum ; and though it is certainly capable of improvement, I fear not to such an amount as to afford him a very comfortable income. Such as it is, however, my pleasure in presenting him to it will be very great. Pray assure him of it."

Elinor's astonishment at this commission could hardly have been greater had the colonel been really making her an offer of his hand. The preferment, which only two days before she had considered as hopeless for Edward, was already provided to enable him to marry, and she, of all people in the world, was fixed on to bestow it ! Her gratitude for the particular friendship, which prompted Colonel Brandon to this act, was strongly felt and warmly expressed. Edward, she believed, was still in town, and fortunately she had heard his address from Miss Steele. She could undertake, therefore, to inform him of it in the course of the day.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"WELL, Miss Dashwood," said Mrs. Jennings, sagaciously smiling, as soon as the gentleman had withdrawn, "I do not ask you what the colonel has been saying to you; for though, upon my honour, I *tried* to keep out of hearing, I could not help catching enough to understand his business, and I assure you I never was better pleased in my life, and I wish you joy of it with all my heart."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Elinor. "It *is* a matter of great joy to me, and I feel the goodness of Colonel Brandon most sensibly. There are not many men who would act as he has done—few people who have so compassionate a heart! I never was more astonished in my life."

They were interrupted by the servant's coming in to announce the carriage being at the door; and Mrs. Jennings, immediately preparing to go, said,—

"Well, my dear, I must be gone before I have had half my talk out, and besides, you must long to tell your sister about it all."

Marianne had left the room before the conversation began.

"Certainly, ma'am, I shall tell Marianne of it; but I shall not mention it at present to anybody else."

"Oh, very well," said Mrs. Jennings, rather disappointed. "Then you would not have me tell it Lucy?"

"No, ma'am, not even Lucy, if you please. One day's delay will not be very material; and till I have written to Mr. Ferrars, I think it ought not to be mentioned to anybody else. I shall do *that* directly. It is of importance that no time should be lost with him, for he will, of course, have much to do relative to his ordination."

This speech at first puzzled Mrs. Jennings exceedingly. Why Mr. Ferrars was to be written to about it in such a hurry she could not immediately comprehend. A few moments' reflection, however, produced a very happy idea, and she exclaimed,—

"Oho! I understand you. Mr. Ferrars is to be the man. Ay, to be sure, he must be ordained in readiness; and I am very glad to find things are so forward between you. But, my dear, is not this rather out of character? Should not the colonel write himself? Sure, he is the proper person."

Elinor did not quite understand the beginning of Mrs. Jennings's speech, neither did she think it worth inquiring into, and therefore only replied to its conclusion.

"Colonel Brandon is so delicate a man that he rather wished any one to announce his intentions to Mr. Ferrars than himself."

"And so *you* are forced to do it. Well, *that* is an odd kind of delicacy! However, I will not disturb you"— seeing her preparing to write. "You know your own concerns best. So good-bye, my dear."

And away she went.

Elinor sat deliberating over her paper, with the pen in

her hand, till broken in on by the entrance of Edward himself.

He had met Mrs. Jennings at the door, in her way to the carriage, as he came to leave his farewell card; and she had obliged him to enter, by saying that Miss Dashwood was above, and wanted to speak with him on very particular business.

Elinor had not seen him before since his engagement became public, and therefore not since his knowing her to be acquainted with it; which, with the consciousness of what she had been thinking of and what she had to tell him, made her feel particularly uncomfortable for some minutes. He, too, was much distressed; and they sat down together in a most promising state of embarrassment.

"Mrs. Jennings told me," said he, "that you wished to speak with me—at least I understood her so, or I certainly should not have intruded on you in such a manner; though, at the same time, I should have been extremely sorry to leave London without seeing you and your sister, especially as it will most likely be some time—it is not probable that I should soon have the pleasure of meeting you again. I go to Oxford to-morrow."

"You would not have gone, however," said Elinor, recovering herself, and determined to get over what she so much dreaded as soon as possible, "without receiving our good wishes, even if we had not been able to give them in person. Mrs. Jennings was quite right in what she said. I have something of consequence to inform you of, which I was on the point of communicating by paper. I am charged with a most agreeable office"—breathing rather faster than usual as she spoke. "Colonel

Brandon, who was here only ten minutes ago, has desired me to say that, understanding you mean to take orders, he has great pleasure in offering you the living of Delaford, now just vacant, and only wishes it were more valuable. Allow me to congratulate you, and to join in his wish that the living—it is about two hundred a year—were much more considerable, and such as might better enable you to—as might be more than a temporary accommodation to yourself—such, in short, as might establish all your views of happiness."

What Edward felt, as he could not say it himself, it cannot be expected that any one else should say for him. He *looked* all the astonishment which such unexpected, such unthought-of information could not fail of exciting; but he said only these two words,—

"Colonel Brandon!"

"Yes," continued Elinor, gathering more resolution, as some of the worst was over. "Colonel Brandon means it as a testimony of his concern for what has lately passed,—a concern which I am sure Marianne, myself, and all your friends must share; and likewise as a proof of his high esteem of your general character, and his particular approbation of your behaviour on the present occasion."

"Colonel Brandon give *me* a living! Can it be possible?"

"The unkindness of your own relations has made you astonished to find friendship anywhere."

"No," replied he, with sudden consciousness, "not to find it in you; for I cannot be ignorant that to you, to your goodness, I owe it all. I feel it—I would express it if I could, but, as you well know, I am no orator."

"You are very much mistaken. I do assure you that

you owe it entirely, at least almost entirely, to your own merit, and Colonel Brandon's discernment of it. As a friend of mine, of my family, he may, perhaps—indeed I know he *has*—still greater pleasure in bestowing it ; but, upon my word, you owe nothing to my solicitation."

For a short time he sat deep in thought, after Elinor had ceased to speak ; at last, as if it were rather an effort, he said,—

" Colonel Brandon seems a man of great worth and respectability. I have always heard him spoken of as such, and your brother, I know, esteems him highly."

" Indeed," replied Elinor, " I believe that you will find him, on further acquaintance, all that you have heard him to be ; and as you will be such very near neighbours, it is particularly important that he *should* be all this."

" Colonel Brandon, I think, lodges in St. James's Street," said he, soon afterwards, rising from his chair.

Elinor told him the number of the house.

" I must hurry away, then, to give him those thanks which you will not allow me to give you ; to assure him that he has made me a very—an exceedingly happy man."

Elinor did not offer to detain him, and they parted, with a very earnest assurance on her side of her unceasing good wishes for his happiness in every change of situation that might befall him ; on *his*, with rather an attempt to return the same good-will than the power of expressing it.

" When I see him again," said Elinor to herself, as the door shut him out, " I shall see him the husband of Lucy."

When Mrs. Jennings came home, her mind was so much more occupied by the important secret in her possession, than by anything else, that she reverted to it again as soon as Elinor appeared.

"Well, my dear," she cried, "I sent you up the young man. And I suppose you did not find him very unwilling to accept your proposal?"

"No, ma'am; *that* was not very likely."

"Well, and how soon will he be ready?"

"Really," said Elinor, "I know so little of these kind of forms; but I suppose two or three months will complete his ordination."

"Two or three months!" cried Mrs. Jennings. "Lord! my dear, how calmly you talk of it! And can the colonel wait two or three months? Sure, somebody else might be found that would do as well—somebody that is in orders already."

"My dear ma'am," said Elinor, "what can you be thinking of? Why, Colonel Brandon's only object is to be of use to Mr. Ferrars."

"Lord bless you, my dear! Sure you do not mean to persuade me that the colonel only marries you for the sake of giving ten guineas to Mr. Ferrars!"

The deception could not continue after this, and an explanation immediately took place, by which both gained considerable amusement for the moment, without any material loss of happiness to either; for Mrs. Jennings only exchanged one form of delight for another, and still without forfeiting her expectation of the first.

CHAPTER XL

EDWARD having carried out his thanks to Colonel Brandon, proceeded with his happiness to Lucy; and such was the excess of it by the time he reached Bartlett's Buildings, that she was able to assure Mrs. Jennings, who called on her again the next day with her congratulations, that she had never seen him in such spirits before in her life.

Her own happiness and her own spirits were at least very certain, and she joined Mrs. Jennings most heartily in her expectation of their being all comfortably together in Delaford Parsonage before Michaelmas. As for Colonel Brandon, she was not only ready to worship him as a saint, but was, moreover, truly anxious that he should be treated as one in all worldly concerns; anxious that his tithes should be raised to the utmost; and secretly resolved to avail herself at Delaford, as far as she possibly could, of his servants, his carriage, his cows, and his poultry.

It was now above a week since John Dashwood had called in Berkeley Street, and as since that time no notice had been taken by them of his wife's indisposition beyond one verbal inquiry, Elinor began to feel it necessary to pay her a visit. Marianne, not contented with absolutely refusing to go herself, was very urgent to

prevent her sister's going at all; and Mrs. Jennings, though her carriage was always at Elinor's service, so very much disliked Mrs. John Dashwood that not even her curiosity to see how she looked after the late discovery, nor her strong desire to affront her by taking Edward's part, could overcome her unwillingness to be in her company again. The consequence was that Elinor set out by herself to pay a visit for which no one could really have less inclination.

Mrs. Dashwood was denied; but before the carriage could turn from the house, her husband accidentally came out. He expressed great pleasure in meeting Elinor, and assuring her that Fanny would be very glad to see her, invited her to come in.

They walked upstairs into the drawing-room. Nobody was there.

"Fanny is in her own room, I suppose," said he. "I will go to her presently. I am not sorry to see you alone, for I have a good deal to say to you. This living of Colonel Brandon's—has he really given it to Edward?"

"It is perfectly true. Colonel Brandon has given the living of Delaford to Edward."

"Really! Well, this is very astonishing! No relationship—no connection between them! And now that livings fetch such a price, what was the value of this?"

"About two hundred a year."

"It is truly astonishing!" he cried, "what could be the colonel's motive?"

"A very simple one—to be of use to Mr. Ferrars."

"Well, well, whatever Colonel Brandon may be, Edward is a very lucky man. You will not mention the matter to Fanny, however; for though I have broke it

to her, and she bears it vastly well, she will not like to hear it much talked of. Mrs. Ferrars," added he, lowering his voice to the tone becoming so important a subject, "knows nothing about it at present, and I believe it will be best to keep it entirely concealed from her as long as may be. When the marriage takes place, I fear she must hear of it all."

"But why should such precaution be used? She has done with her son—she has cast him off for ever. Surely after doing so, she cannot retain the anxiety of a parent!"

"Ah, Elinor," said John, "your reasoning is very good, but it is founded on ignorance of human nature. Mrs. Ferrars can never forget that Edward is her son."

"You surprise me; I should think it must nearly have escaped her memory by this time."

"You wrong her exceedingly. Mrs. Ferrars is one of the most affectionate mothers in the world."

Elinor said no more, and John was also for a short time silent. His reflections ended thus:—

"Of one thing, my dear sister," kindly taking her hand and speaking in an awful whisper, "I may assure you, I have it from the very best authority—not that I ever precisely heard Mrs. Ferrars say it herself, but her daughter did, and I have it from her—that, in short, whatever objections there might be against a certain—a certain connection, you understand me—it would have been far preferable to her; it would not have given her half the vexation that *this* does. I was exceedingly pleased to hear that Mrs. Ferrars considered it in that light; a very gratifying circumstance, you know, to us all. 'It would have been beyond comparison,' she said,

' the least evil of the two ; and she would be glad to compound now for nothing worse.' "

Elinor had heard enough to agitate her nerves and fill her mind ; and she was, therefore, glad to be spared from the necessity of saying much in reply herself, and from the danger of hearing anything more from her brother, by the entrance of Mr. Robert Ferrars. After a few moments' chat, John Dashwood, recollecting that Fanny was yet uninformed of his sister's being there, quitted the room in quest of her ; and Elinor was left to improve her acquaintance with Robert.

They had scarcely been two minutes by themselves before he began to speak of Edward ; for he, too, had heard of the living, and was very inquisitive on the subject. Elinor repeated the particulars of it, as she had given them to John ; and their effect on Robert, though very different, was not less striking than it had been on him. He laughed most immoderately. The idea of Edward's being a clergyman, and living in a small parsonage-house, diverted him beyond measure ; and when to that was added the fanciful imagery of Edward reading prayers in a white surplice, and publishing the banns of marriage between John Smith and Mary Brown, he could conceive nothing more ridiculous.

" We may treat it as a joke," said he at last, recovering from the affected laugh which had considerably lengthened out the genuine gaiety of the moment ; " but upon my soul, it is a most serious business. Poor Edward ! he is ruined for ever. My mother was the first person who told me of it ; and I, feeling myself called on to act with resolution, immediately said to her, ' My dear madam, I do not know what you may intend to

do on the occasion ; but as for myself, I must say that if Edward does marry this young woman, *I* never will see him again.' That was what I said immediately. My poor mother was half frantic."

" Have you ever seen the lady ? "

" Yes : once, while she was staying in this house I happened to drop in for ten minutes, and I saw quite enough of her—the merest awkward country girl, without style, or elegance, and almost without beauty. I remember her perfectly. Just the kind of girl I should suppose likely to captivate poor Edward. He must be starved, you know, that is certain—absolutely starved."

He had just settled this point with great composure, when the entrance of Mrs. John Dashwood put an end to the subject.

CHAPTER XLI

VERY early in April, and tolerably early in the day, the two parties set out from their respective homes, to meet, by appointment, on the road. For the convenience of Charlotte and her child, they were to be more than two days on their journey ; and Mr. Palmer, travelling more expeditiously with Colonel Brandon, was to join them at Cleveland soon after their arrival.

Their journey was safely performed. The second day brought them into the county of Somerset—and in the forenoon of the third they drove up to Cleveland.

Marianne entered the house with a heart swelling with emotion from the consciousness of being only eighty miles from Barton, and not thirty from Combe Magna ; and before she had been five minutes within its walls, while the others were busily helping Charlotte to show her child to the housekeeper, she quitted it again, stealing away through the winding shrubberies, now just beginning to be in beauty, to gain a distant eminence, where, from its Grecian temple, her eye, wandering over a wide tract of country to the south-east, could fondly rest on the farthest ridge of hills on the horizon, and fancy that from their summits Combe Magna might be seen.

She returned just in time to join the others, as they

quitted the house, on an excursion through its more immediate premises; and the rest of the morning was easily whiled away in lounging round the kitchen garden, examining the bloom upon its walls, and listening to the gardener's lamentations upon blights—in dawdling through the greenhouse, where the loss of her favourite plants, unwarily exposed, and nipped by the lingering frost, raised the laughter of Charlotte—and in visiting her poultry yard, where, in the disappointed hopes of her dairymaid, by hens forsaking their nests, or being stolen by a fox, or in the rapid decease of a promising young brood, she found fresh sources of merriment.

Their party was small, and the hours passed quietly away. Mrs. Palmer had her child, and Mrs. Jennings her carpet-work; they talked of the friends they had left behind, arranged Lady Middleton's engagements, and wondered whether Mr. Palmer and Colonel Brandon would get further than Reading that night.

The two gentlemen arrived the next day to a very late dinner, affording a pleasant enlargement of the party, and a very welcome variety to their conversation, which a long morning of rain had reduced very low.

Elinor had seen so little of Mr. Palmer that she knew not what to expect to find him in his own family. She found him, however, perfectly the gentleman in his behaviour to all his visitors, and only occasionally rude to his wife and her mother.

Two delightful twilight walks on the third and fourth evenings of her being there, not merely on the dry gravel of the shrubbery, but all over the grounds, and especially in the most distant parts of them, where there was something more of wildness than in the rest, had, assisted by

the still greater imprudence of sitting in her wet shoes and stockings, given Marianne a cold so violent as, though for a day or two trifled with or denied, would force itself by increasing ailments on the concern of everybody and the notice of herself. Prescriptions poured in from all quarters, and, as usual, were all declined. Though heavy and feverish, with a pain in her limbs, a cough, and a sore throat, a good night's rest was to cure her entirely ; and it was with difficulty that Elinor prevailed on her, when she went to bed, to try one or two of the simplest of the remedies.

CHAPTER XLII

MARIANNE got up the next morning at her usual time; to every enquiry replied that she was better, and tried to prove herself so by engaging in her accustomary employments. But a day spent in sitting shivering over the fire with a book in her hand, which she was unable to read, or in lying, weary and languid, on a sofa, did not speak much in favour of her amendment; and when at last she went early to bed, more and more indisposed, Colonel Brandon was only astonished at her sister's composure, who, though attending and nursing her the whole day, against Marianne's inclination, and forcing proper medicines on her at night, trusted, like Marianne, to the certainty and efficacy of sleep, and felt no real alarm.

A very restless and feverish night, however, disappointed the expectation of both; and when Marianne, after persisting in rising, confessed herself unable to sit up, and returned voluntarily to her bed, Elinor was very ready to adopt Mrs. Jennings's advice, of sending for the Palmers' apothecary.

He came, examined his patient, and though encouraging Miss Dashwood to expect that a very few days would restore her sister to health, yet, by pronouncing her disorder to have a putrid tendency, and allowing the word "infection" to pass his lips, gave instant alarm to Mrs.

Palmer, on her baby's account. Mrs. Jennings, who had been inclined from the first to think Marianne's complaint more serious than Elinor, now looked very grave on Mr. Harris's report, and confirming Charlotte's fears and caution, urged the necessity of her immediate removal with her infant; and Mr. Palmer, though treating their apprehensions as idle, found the anxiety and importunity of his wife too great to be withstood. Her departure was, therefore, fixed on; and within an hour after Mr. Harris's arrival she set off, with her little boy and his nurse, for the house of a near relation of Mr. Palmer's, who lived a few miles on the other side of Bath, where her husband promised, at her earnest entreaty, to join her in a day or two, and whither she was almost equally urgent with her mother to accompany her. Mrs. Jennings, however, with a kindness of heart which made Elinor really love her, declared her resolution of not stirring from Cleveland as long as Marianne remained ill, and of endeavouring, by her own attentive care, to supply to her the place of the mother she had taken her from; and Elinor found her on every occasion a most willing and active helpmate, desirous to share in all her fatigues, and often, by her better experience in nursing, of material use.

The next day produced little or no alteration in the state of the patient: she certainly was not better, and, except that there was no amendment, did not appear worse. Their party was now further reduced: for Mr. Palmer, though very unwilling to go, as well from real humanity and good-nature as from a dislike of appearing to be frightened away by his wife, was persuaded at last by Colonel Brandon to perform his promise of following

her ; and while he was preparing to go, Colonel Brandon himself, with a much greater exertion, began to talk of going likewise. Here, however, the kindness of Mrs. Jennings interposed most acceptably ; for to send the colonel away while his love was in so much uneasiness on her sister's account would be to deprive them both, she thought, of every comfort, and therefore, telling him at once that his stay at Cleveland was necessary to herself, that she should want him to play at piquet of an evening, while Miss Dashwood was above with her sister, etc., she urged him so strongly to remain, that he, who was gratifying the first wish of his own heart by a compliance, could not long even affect to demur, especially as Mrs. Jennings's entreaty was warmly seconded by Mr. Palmer, who seemed to feel a relief to himself in leaving behind him a person so well able to assist or advise Miss Dashwood in any emergency.

On the morning of the third day, when Mr. Harris arrived, he declared his patient materially better. Her pulse was much stronger, and every symptom more favourable than on the preceding visit.

But the day did not close so auspiciously as it began. Towards the evening Marianne became ill again, growing more heavy, restless, and uncomfortable than before. Her sister was willing to attribute the change to nothing more than the fatigue of having sat up to have her bed made ; and carefully administering the cordials prescribed, saw her, with satisfaction, sink at last into a slumber, from which she expected the most beneficial effects. Her sleep, though not so quiet as Elinor wished to see it, lasted a considerable time ; and anxious to observe the result of it herself, she resolved to sit with

her during the whole of it. Mrs. Jennings, knowing nothing of any change in the patient, went unusually early to bed; her maid, who was one of the principal nurses, was recreating herself in the housekeeper's room, and Elinor remained alone with Marianne.

The repose of the latter became more and more disturbed; and her sister, who watched with unremitting attention her continual change of posture, and heard the frequent but inarticulate sounds of complaint which passed her lips, was almost wishing to rouse her from so painful a slumber, when Marianne, suddenly awakened by some accidental noise in the house, started hastily up, and with feverish wildness cried out,—

"Is mamma coming?"

"Not yet," replied the other, concealing her terror, and assisting Marianne to lie down again; "but she will be here, I hope, before it is long. It is a great way, you know, from hence to Barton."

"But she must not go round by London," cried Marianne, in the same hurried manner. "I shall never see her if she goes by London."

Elinor perceived with alarm that she was not quite herself, and while attempting to soothe her, eagerly felt her pulse. It was lower and quicker than ever. And Marianne still talking wildly of mamma, her alarm increased so rapidly as to determine her on sending instantly for Mr. Harris, and dispatching a messenger to Barton for her mother. To consult with Colonel Brandon on the best means of effecting the latter was a thought which immediately followed the resolution of its performance; and as soon as she had rung up the maid to take her place by her sister, she hastened down to the drawing-

room, where she knew he was generally to be found at a much later hour than the present.

It was no time for hesitation. Her fears and her difficulties were immediately before him. Her fears he had no courage, no confidence to attempt the removal of—he listened to them in silent despondence ; but her difficulties were instantly obviated, for, with a readiness that seemed to speak the occasion and the service prearranged in his mind, he offered himself as the messenger who should fetch Mrs. Dashwood. Elinor thanked him with brief though fervent gratitude ; and while he went to hurry off his servant with a message to Mr. Harris and an order for post-horses directly, she wrote a few lines to her mother.

Not a moment was lost in delay of any kind. The horses arrived even before they were expected ; and Colonel Brandon, only pressing her hand with a look of solemnity and a few words spoken too low to reach her ear, hurried into the carriage. It was then about twelve o'clock, and she returned to her sister's apartment to wait for the arrival of the apothecary, and to watch by her the rest of the night. It was a night of almost equal suffering to both. Hour after hour passed away in sleepless pain and delirium on Marianne's side, and in the most cruel anxiety on Elinor's.

She was on the point of sending again for Mr. Harris, or if he could not come, for some other advice, when the former—but not till after five o'clock—arrived. His opinion, however, made some little amends for this delay ; for though acknowledging a very unexpected and unpleasant alteration in his patient, he would not allow the danger to be material, and talked of the relief which

a fresh mode of treatment must procure, with a confidence which, in a lesser degree, was communicated to Elinor. He promised to call again in the course of three or four hours, and left both the patient and her anxious attendant more composed than he had found them.

Mr. Harris was punctual in his second visit; but he came to be disappointed in his hopes of what the last would produce. His medicines had failed; the fever was unabated; and Marianne only more quiet—not more herself—remained in a heavy stupor. Elinor, catching all, and more than all, his fears in a moment, proposed to call in further advice. But he judged it unnecessary; he had still something more to try, some fresh application, of whose success he was almost as confident as the last; and his visit concluded with encouraging assurances which reached the ear but could not enter the heart of Miss Dashwood.

About noon, however, she began, but with a caution, to hope she could perceive a slight amendment in her sister's pulse. Half an hour passed away, and the favourable symptom yet blessed her. Others even arose to confirm it. Her breath, her skin, her lips, all flattered Elinor with signs of amendment; and Marianne fixed her eyes on her with a rational though languid gaze. Anxiety and hope now oppressed her in equal degrees, and left her no moment for tranquillity till the arrival of Mr. Harris at four o'clock, when his assurances, his felicitations on a recovery in her sister even surpassing his expectation, gave her confidence, comfort, and tears of joy.

Marianne was in every respect materially better, and he declared her entirely out of danger.

Elinor continued by the side of her sister, with little intermission, the whole afternoon—calming every fear, satisfying every inquiry of her enfeebled spirits, supplying every succour, and watching almost every look and every breath. The possibility of a relapse would, of course, in some moments, occur to remind her of what anxiety was; but when she saw, on her frequent and minute examination, that every symptom of recovery continued, and saw Marianne at six o'clock sink into a quiet, steady, and to all appearance comfortable sleep, she silenced every doubt.

The time was now drawing on when Colonel Brandon might be expected back.

The night was cold and stormy. The wind roared round the house, the rain beat against the windows; but Elinor, all happiness within, regarded it not. Marianne slept through every blast; and the travellers, they had a rich reward in store for every present inconvenience.

The clock struck eight. Had it been ten, Elinor would have been convinced that at that moment she heard a carriage driving up to the house; and so strong was the persuasion that she did, in spite of the almost impossibility of their being already come, that she moved into the adjoining dressing-closet and opened a window-shutter, to be satisfied of the truth. She instantly saw that her ears had not deceived her. The flaring lamps of a carriage were immediately in view. By their uncertain light she thought she could discern it to be drawn by four horses; and this, while it told the excess of her poor mother's alarm, gave some explanation to such unexpected rapidity.

Never in her life had Elinor found it so difficult to be

calm as at that moment. The knowledge of what her mother must be feeling as the carriage stopped at the door—of her doubt, her dread, perhaps her despair, and of what *she* had to tell—with such knowledge it was impossible to be calm. All that remained to be done was to be speedy; and therefore, staying only till she could leave Mrs. Jennings's maid with her sister, she hurried downstairs.

The bustle in the vestibule, as she passed along an inner lobby, assured her that they were already in the house. She rushed forwards towards the drawing-room; she entered it—and saw only Willoughby.

CHAPTER XLIII

ELINOR, starting back with a look of horror at the sight of him, obeyed the first impulse of her heart in turning instantly to quit the room; and her hand was already on the lock, when its action was suspended by his hastily advancing, and saying, in a voice rather of command than supplication,—

"Miss Dashwood, for half an hour—for ten minutes—I entreat you to stay."

"No, sir," she replied, with firmness, "I shall *not* stay. Your business cannot be with *me*. The servants, I suppose, forgot to tell you that Mr. Palmer was not in the house."

"Had they told me," he cried, with vehemence, "that Mr. Palmer and all his relations were at the devil, it would not have turned me from the door. My business is with you, and only you."

"With me!"—in the utmost amazement; "well, sir, be quick, and—if you can—less violent."

"Sit down, and I will be both."

She hesitated; she knew not what to do. The possibility of Colonel Brandon's arriving and finding him there came across her. But she had promised to hear him, and her curiosity no less than her honour was engaged. After a moment's recollection, therefore, con-

cluding that prudence required dispatch, and that her acquiescence would best promote it, she walked silently towards the table, and sat down. He took the opposite chair, and for half a minute not a word was said by either.

"Pray be quick, sir," said Elinor impatiently: "I have no time to spare."

"Your sister," said he with abruptness, "is out of danger. I heard it from the servant. God be praised! But is it true? is it really true?"

Elinor would not speak. He repeated the inquiry with yet greater eagerness.

"For God's sake, tell me is she out of danger, or is she not?"

"We hope she is."

He rose up, and walked across the room.

"Had I known as much half an hour ago—but since I *am* here, what does it signify? For once, Miss Dashwood—it will be the last time, perhaps—let us be cheerful together. I am in a fine mood for gaiety. Tell me honestly," a deeper glow overspreading his cheeks, "do you think me most a knave or a fool?"

Elinor looked at him with greater astonishment than ever. She began to think that he must be in liquor—the strangeness of such a visit, and of such manners, seemed no otherwise intelligible—and with this impression she immediately rose, saying,—

"Mr. Willoughby, I advise you at present to return to Combe. I am not at leisure to remain with you longer. Whatever your business may be with me, it will be better recollected and explained to-morrow."

"I understand you," he replied, with an expressive

smile, and a voice perfectly calm: "yes, I am very drunk. A pint of porter with my cold beef at Marlborough was enough to overset me."

"At Marlborough!" cried Elinor, more and more at a loss to understand what he would be at.

"Yes. I left London this morning at eight o'clock, and the only ten minutes I have spent out of my chaise since that time procured me a nuncheon at Marlborough."

The steadiness of his manner, and the intelligence of his eye as he spoke, convincing Elinor that whatever other unpardonable folly might bring him to Cleveland, he was not brought there by intoxication, she said after a moment's recollection,—

"Mr. Willoughby, you *ought* to feel, and I certainly *do*, that after what has passed your coming here in this manner, and forcing yourself upon my notice, requires a very particular excuse. What is it that you mean by it?"

"I mean," said he, with serious energy, "if I can, to make you hate me one degree less than you do now. I mean to offer some kind of explanation, some kind of apology, for the past; to open my whole heart to you, and by convincing you that, though I have been always a blockhead, I have not been always a rascal, to obtain something like forgiveness from Ma——, from your sister."

"Is this the real reason of your coming?"

"Upon my soul it is," was his answer, with a warmth which brought all the former Willoughby to her remembrance, and, in spite of herself, made her think him sincere.

"If that is all, you may be satisfied already; for Marianne *does*—she has *long* forgiven you."

"Has she?" he cried, in the same eager tone. "Then she has forgiven me before she ought to have done it. But she shall forgive me again, and on more reasonable grounds. Now, will you listen to me?"

Elinor bowed her assent.

"I do not know," said he, "how *you* may have accounted for my behaviour to your sister, or what diabolical motive you may have imputed to me. When I first became intimate in your family, I had no other intention than to pass my time pleasantly while I was obliged to remain in Devonshire. Your sister's lovely person and interesting manners could not but please me; and her behaviour to me almost from the first was of a kind—it is astonishing, when I reflect on what it was and what *she* was, that my heart should have been so insensible! But at first, I must confess, my vanity only was elevated by it. Careless of her happiness, giving way to feelings which I had always been too much in the habit of indulging, I endeavoured, by every means in my power, to make myself pleasing to her, without any design of returning her affection."

Miss Dashwood at this point, turning her eyes on him with the most angry contempt, stopped him by saying,—

"It is hardly worth while, Mr. Willoughby, for you to relate, or for me to listen, any longer. Do not let me be pained by hearing anything more on the subject."

"I insist on your hearing the whole of it," he replied. "My fortune was never large, and I had always been in the habit of associating with people of better income than myself. Every year had added to my debts; and

though the death of my old cousin, Mrs. Smith, was to set me free, yet that event being uncertain, and possibly far distant, it had been for some time my intention to re-establish my circumstances by marrying a woman of fortune. To attach myself to your sister, therefore, was not a thing to be thought of. To avoid a comparative poverty, which her affection and her society would have deprived of all its horrors, I have, by raising myself to affluence, lost everything that could make it a blessing."

"You did, then," said Elinor, a little softened, "believe yourself at one time attached to her?"

"To have resisted such attractions, to have withstood such tenderness—is there a man on earth who could have done it? Yes, I found myself, by insensible degrees, sincerely fond of her, and the happiest hours of my life were what I spent with her when I felt my intentions were strictly honourable and my feelings blameless. I had determined, as soon as I could engage her alone, to justify the attentions I had so invariably paid her, and openly assure her of an affection which I had already taken such pains to display. But in the interim of the very few hours that were to pass before I could have an opportunity of speaking with her in private—a circumstance occurred to ruin all my resolution, and with it all my comfort. A discovery took place"—here he hesitated and looked down. "Mrs. Smith had, somehow or other, been informed, I imagine by some distant relation, whose interest it was to deprive me of her favour, of an affair, a connection—but I need not explain myself further," he added, looking at her with a heightened colour and an inquiring eye—"your particular intimacy—you have probably heard the whole story long ago."

"I have," returned Elinor, colouring likewise, and hardening her heart anew against any compassion for him—"I have heard it all; and how you will explain away any part of your guilt in that dreadful business I confess is beyond my comprehension."

"Remember," cried Willoughby, "I do not mean to justify myself, I do not mean to defend myself. I wish—I heartily wish it had never been."

"Well, sir, and what said Mrs. Smith?"

"She taxed me with the offence at once, and my confusion may be guessed. The purity of her life, the formality of her notions, her ignorance of the world—everything was against me. By one measure I might have saved myself. In the height of her morality, good woman, she offered to forgive the past if I would marry Eliza. That could not be, and I was formally dismissed from her favour and her house. The night following this affair was spent by me in deliberating on what my future conduct should be. The struggle was great, but it ended too soon. I had reason to believe myself secure of my present wife, if I chose to address her, and I persuaded myself to think that nothing else in common prudence remained for me to do. I was engaged to dine with you; some apology was therefore necessary for my breaking the engagement. But whether I should write this apology or deliver it in person was a point of long debate. To see Marianne I felt would be dreadful, and I even doubted whether I could see her again and keep to my resolution. In that point, however, I under-valued my own magnanimity, as the event declared; for I went, I saw her, and saw her miserable, and left her miserable—and left her hoping never to see her again."

"Why did you call, Mr. Willoughby?" said Elinor reproachfully; "a note would have answered every purpose."

"I could not bear to leave the country in a manner that might lead you, or the rest of the neighbourhood, to suspect any part of what had really passed between Mrs. Smith and myself, and I resolved, therefore, on calling at the cottage, in my way to Honiton. The sight of your dear sister, however, was really dreadful; and to heighten the matter, I found her alone. I had left her only the evening before, so fully, so firmly resolved within myself on doing right! A few hours were to have engaged her to me for ever; and I remember how happy, how gay were my spirits as I walked from the cottage to Allenham, satisfied with myself, delighted with everybody! But in this, our last interview of friendship, I approached her with a sense of guilt that almost took from me the power of dissembling. Her sorrow, her disappointment, her deep regret, when I told her that I was obliged to leave Devonshire so immediately—I never shall forget it—united, too, with such reliance, such confidence in me! O God, what a hard-hearted rascal I was! Then came your dear mother to torture me further, with all her kindness and confidence. Thank Heaven! it *did* torture me—I was miserable."

He stopped.

"Well, sir," said Elinor, who, though pitying him, grew impatient for his departure, "and this is all?"

"All! No; have you forgot what passed in town? That infamous letter—did she show it you?"

"Yes; I saw every note that passed."

"When the first of hers reached me, what I felt is not

to be expressed. Every line, every word, was a dagger to my heart. Marianne's note, by assuring me that I was still as dear to her as in former days, awakened all my remorse. I felt that she was infinitely dearer to me than any other woman in the world, and that I was using her infamously. But everything was then just settled between Miss Grey and me. To retreat was impossible. All that I had to do was to avoid you both. I avoided the Middletons as much as possible, as well as everybody else who was likely to prove an acquaintance in common. Not aware of their being in town, however, I blundered on Sir John, I believe, the first day of his coming, and the day after I had called at Mrs. Jennings's. He asked me to a party, a dance at his house in the evening. The next morning brought another short note from Marianne—still affectionate, open, artless, confiding—everything that could make *my* conduct most hateful. I could not answer it. I tried, but could not frame a sentence. But I thought of her, I believe, every moment of the day. If you *can* pity me, Miss Dashwood, pity my situation as it was then. With my head and heart full of your sister, I was forced to play the happy lover to another woman. Those three or four weeks were worse than all. Well, at last, as I need not tell you, you were forced on me. And what a sweet figure I cut! what an evening of agony it was! Marianne, beautiful as an angel on one side, calling me Willoughby in such a tone—O God, holding out her hand to me, asking me for an explanation with those bewitching eyes fixed in such speaking solicitude on my face! and Sophia, jealous as the devil, on the other hand, looking all that was—— Well, it does not signify: it

is over now. Such an evening! I ran away from you all as soon as I could, but not before I had seen Marianne's sweet face as white as death. That was the last, last look I ever had of her—the last manner in which she appeared to me. Yet when I thought of her to-day as really dying, it was a kind of comfort to me to imagine that I knew exactly how she would appear to those who saw her last in this world. She was before me, constantly before me, as I travelled, in the same look and hue."

A short pause of mutual thoughtfulness succeeded. Willoughby, first rousing himself, broke it thus,—

"Well, let me make haste and be gone. Your sister is certainly better, certainly out of danger?"

"But the letter, Mr. Willoughby, your own letter; have you anything to say about that?"

"Yes, yes, *that* in particular. I was breakfasting at the Ellisons', and her letter, with some others, was brought to me there from my lodgings. It happened to catch Sophia's eye before it caught mine, and the elegance of the paper, the handwriting altogether, immediately gave her a suspicion of its nature. Some vague report had reached her before of my attachment to some young lady in Devonshire, and what had passed within her observation the preceding evening had marked who the young lady was, and made her more jealous than ever. Affecting that air of playfulness, therefore, which is delightful in a woman one loves, she opened the letter directly and read its contents. She was well paid for her impudence. She read what made her wretched. Her wretchedness I could have borne, but her passion—her malice—at all events it must be appeased. And in short, what do you think of my wife's style of

letter-writing ?—delicate, tender, truly feminine, was it not ? "

" Your wife ! The letter was in your own handwriting."

" Yes, but I had only the credit of servilely copying such sentences as I was ashamed to put my name to. The original was all her own—her own happy thoughts and gentle diction. What could I do ? We were engaged, everything in preparation, the day almost fixed. In honest words, her money was necessary to me, and in a situation like mine anything was to be done to prevent a rupture. And after all, what did it signify to my character, in the opinion of Marianne and her friends, in what language my answer was couched ? 'I am ruined for ever in their opinion,' said I to myself ; 'they already think me an unprincipled fellow ; this letter will only make them think me a blackguard one.' Such were my reasonings as, in a sort of desperate carelessness, I copied my wife's words, and parted with the last relics of Marianne. Her three notes—unluckily they were all in my pocket-book, or I should have denied their existence, and hoarded them for ever—I was forced to put them up, and could not even kiss them. And the lock of hair—that, too, I had always carried about me in the same pocket-book, which was now searched by madam with the most ingratiating virulence—the dear lock—all, every memento was torn from me."

" You are very wrong, Mr. Willoughby—very blamable," said Elinor, while her voice, in spite of herself, betrayed her compassionate emotion. " You ought not to speak in this way either of Mrs. Willoughby or my sister. You have made your own choice ; it was not

forced on you. Your wife has a claim to your politeness, to your respect, at least. She must be attached to you, or she would not have married you. To treat her with unkindness, to speak of her slightingly, is no atonement to Marianne; nor can I suppose it a relief to your own conscience."

"Do not talk to me of my wife," said he, with a heavy sigh; "she does not deserve your compassion. She knew I had no regard for her when we were married. And now do you pity me, Miss Dashwood? Or have I said all this to no purpose? My intentions were not always wrong. Have I explained away any part of my guilt?"

"Yes, you have certainly removed something—a little. You have proved your heart less wicked. But I hardly know—the misery that you have inflicted—I hardly know what could have made it worse."

"Will you repeat to your sister, when she is recovered, what I have been telling you? Tell her of my misery and my penitence; tell her that my heart was never inconstant to her, and, if you will, that at this moment she is dearer to me than ever. Last night, in Drury Lane lobby, I ran against Sir John Middleton; he told me that Marianne Dashwood was dying of a putrid fever at Cleveland. What I felt on hearing that your sister was dying, and dying, too, believing me the greatest villain upon earth, scorning, hating me in her latest moments—for how could I tell what horrid projects might not have been imputed? What I felt was dreadful! My resolution was soon made and at eight o'clock this morning I was in my carriage. Now you know all. There is no use in staying here; I must be off."

Elinor assured him that she forgave, pitied, wished him well—was even interested in his happiness—and added some gentle counsel as to the behaviour most likely to promote it. His answer was not very encouraging.

"As to that," said he, "I must rub through the world as well as I can. Domestic happiness is out of the question. If, however, I am allowed to think that you and yours feel an interest in my fate and actions, at least it will be something to live for. Marianne, to be sure, is lost to me for ever. Were I even by any blessed chance at liberty again——"

Elinor stopped him with a reproof.

"Well," he replied, "once more good-bye. God bless you!"

And with these words he almost ran out of the room.

CHAPTER XLIV

Elinor, for some time after he left her, remained too much oppressed by a crowd of ideas, of which sadness was the general result, to think even of her sister.

Willoughby, in spite of all his faults, excited a degree of commiseration for the sufferings produced by them, which made her think of him as now separated for ever from her family, with a tenderness, a regret, rather in proportion, as she soon acknowledged within herself, to his wishes than to his merits.

When at last she returned to the unconscious Marianne, she found her just awaking, refreshed by so long and sweet a sleep to the extent of her hopes. Elinor's heart was full. The past, the present, the future, Willoughby's visit, Marianne's safety, and her mother's expected arrival, threw her altogether into an agitation of spirits which kept off every indication of fatigue, and made her only fearful of betraying herself to her sister. Short was the time, however, in which that fear could affect her, for within half an hour after Willoughby's leaving the house she was again called downstairs by the sound of another carriage.

Mrs. Dashwood, whose terror as they drew near the house had produced almost the conviction of Marianne's

being no more, had no voice to inquire after her, no voice even for Elinor. But *she*, waiting neither for salutation nor inquiry, instantly gave the joyful relief; and her mother, catching it with all her usual warmth, was in a moment as much overcome by her happiness as she had been before by her fears. She was supported into the drawing-room between her daughter and her friend: and there, shedding tears of joy, though still unable to speak, embraced Elinor again and again, turning from her at intervals to press Colonel Brandon's hand, with a look which spoke at once her gratitude, and her conviction of his sharing with herself in the bliss of the moment.

As soon as Mrs. Dashwood had recovered herself, to see Marianne was her first desire; and in two minutes she was with her beloved child, rendered dearer to her than ever by absence, unhappiness, and danger.

Marianne continued to mend every day; and the brilliant cheerfulness of Mrs. Dashwood's looks and spirits proved her to be, as she repeatedly declared herself, one of the happiest women in the world. She had yet another source of joy, unthought of by Elinor. It was thus imparted to her as soon as any opportunity of private conference between them occurred.

"At last we are alone. My Elinor, you do not yet know all my happiness. Colonel Brandon loves Marianne. He opened his whole heart to me yesterday as we travelled. It came out quite unawares, quite undesignedly. I, you may well believe, could talk of nothing but my child; he could not conceal his distress. I saw that it equalled my own; and he made me acquainted with his earnest, tender, constant affection for Marianne. He has loved her, my Elinor, ever since the

first moment of seeing her. His regard for her, infinitely surpassing anything that Willoughby ever felt or feigned, has subsisted through all the knowledge of dear Marianne's unhappy prepossession for that worthless young man! Such a noble mind! such openness, such sincerity! No one can be deceived in *him*."

"Colonel Brandon's character," said Elinor, "as an excellent man is well established. What answer did you give him? Did you allow him to hope?"

"O my love, I could not then talk of hope to him or to myself. Marianne might at that moment be dying. But he did not ask for hope or encouragement. Yet after a time I did say, for at first I was quite overcome, that if she lived, as I trusted she might, my greatest happiness would lie in promoting their marriage; and since our arrival, since our delightful security, I have given him every encouragement in my power. Time, I tell him, will do everything; Marianne's heart is not to be wasted for ever on such a man as Willoughby. His own merits must soon secure it."

CHAPTER XLV

THE day of separation and departure arrived; and Marianne, after taking so particular and lengthened a leave of Mrs. Jennings—one so earnestly grateful, so full of respect and kind wishes—as seemed due to her own heart from a secret acknowledgment of past inattention, and bidding Colonel Brandon farewell with the cordiality of a friend, was carefully assisted by him into the carriage, of which he seemed anxious that she should engross at least half. Mrs. Dashwood and Elinor then followed, and the others were left by themselves to talk of the travellers and feel their own dullness, till Mrs. Jennings was summoned to her chaise to take comfort in the gossip of her maid for the loss of her two young companions; and Colonel Brandon immediately afterwards took his solitary way to Delaford.

Marianne had been two or three days at home before the weather was fine enough for an invalid like herself to venture out. But at last a soft, genial morning appeared, such as might tempt the daughter's wishes and the mother's confidence; and Marianne, leaning on Elinor's arm, was authorized to walk as long as she could without fatigue, in the lane before the house.

The sisters set out at a pace slow as the feebleness of Marianne in an exercise hitherto untried since her illness

required, and they had advanced only so far beyond the house as to admit a full view of the hill, the important hill behind, when, pausing with her eyes turned towards it, Marianne calmly said,—

"There, exactly there," pointing with one hand, "on that projecting mound—there I fell, and there I first saw Willoughby."

Her voice sank with the word, but presently reviving, she added,—

"I am thankful to find that I can look with so little pain on the spot. Shall we ever talk on that subject, Elinor?" hesitatingly it was said. "Or will it be wrong? I *can* talk of it now, I hope, as I ought to do."

Elinor tenderly invited her to be open.

"As for regret," said Marianne, "I have done with that, as far as he is concerned. At present, if I could be satisfied on one point, if I could be allowed to think that he was not always acting a part, not always deceiving me."

She stopped. Elinor joyfully treasured her words as she answered,—

"If you could be assured of that, you think you should be easy."

"Yes. I would suppose him—oh, how gladly would I suppose him!—only fickle, very, very fickle."

Elinor said no more. She was debating within herself on the eligibility of beginning her story directly, or postponing it till Marianne were stronger in health; and they crept on for a few minutes in silence.

"I am not wishing him too much good," said Marianne at last, with a sigh, "when I wish his secret reflections may be no more unpleasant than my own. He will suffer enough in them."

"Do you compare your conduct with his?"

"No; I compare it with what it ought to have been—I compare it with yours."

"Our situations have borne little resemblance."

"They have borne more than our conduct. My illness has made me think. It has given me leisure and calmness for serious recollection. Long before I was enough recovered to talk I was perfectly able to reflect. I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings, and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave. My illness, I well knew, had been entirely brought on by myself, by such negligence of my own health as I had felt, even at the time, to be wrong. Had I died it would have been self-destruction. Had I died, in what peculiar misery should I have left you, my nurse, my friend, my sister! My mother too—how could you have consoled her! I cannot express my own abhorrence of myself. Whenever I looked towards the past, I saw some duty neglected or some failing indulged. The kindness, the unceasing kindness of Mrs. Jennings I had repaid with ungrateful contempt. To the Middletons, the Palmers, the Steeles, to every common acquaintance even, I had been insolent and unjust; with a heart hardened against their merits, and a temper irritated by their very attention. To John, to Fanny—yes, even to them, little as they deserve, I have given less than their due. But you, you above all, above my mother, had been wronged by me. I shall now live solely for my family. You, my mother, and Margaret must henceforth be all the world to me; you will share my affections entirely between you. As for Willoughby, to say that I shall soon, or that I shall ever forget him, would be idle."

She paused—and added in a lower voice, "If I could but know *his* heart, everything would become easy."

Elinor, who had now been for some time reflecting on the propriety or impropriety of speedily hazarding her narration, without feeling at all nearer decision than at first, heard this; and perceiving that as reflection did nothing resolution must do all, soon found herself leading to the fact.

She managed the recital, as she hoped, with address; prepared her anxious listener with caution; related simply and honestly the chief points on which Willoughby grounded his apology; did justice to his repentance, and softened only his protestations of present regard. Marianne said not a word. She trembled; her eyes were fixed on the ground, and her lips became whiter than even sickness had left them. A thousand inquiries sprang up from her heart, but she dared not urge one. She caught every syllable with panting eagerness; her hand, unknowingly to herself, closely pressed her sister's, and tears covered her cheeks.

Elinor, dreading her being tired, led her towards home; and till they reached the door of the cottage, easily conjecturing what her curiosity must be, though no question was suffered to speak it, talked of nothing but Willoughby and their conversation together, and was carefully minute in every particular of speech and look, where minuteness could be safely indulged. As soon as they entered the house, Marianne, with a kiss of gratitude, and these two words just articulate through her tears, "Tell mamma," withdrew from her sister, and walked slowly upstairs.

CHAPTER XLVI

Mrs. Dashwood did not hear unmoved the vindication of her former favourite. She rejoiced in his being cleared from some part of his imputed guilt; she was sorry for him; she wished him happy.

In the evening, when they were all three together, Marianne began voluntarily to speak of him again; but that it was not without an effort, the restless, unquiet thoughtfulness in which she had been for some time previously sitting, her rising colour as she spoke, and her unsteady voice, plainly showed.

"I wish to assure you both," said she, "that I see everything as you can desire me to do."

Mrs. Dashwood would have interrupted her instantly with soothing tenderness, had not Elinor, who really wished to hear her sister's unbiased opinion, by an eager sign engaged her silence. Marianne slowly continued,—

"It is a great relief to me what Elinor told me this morning; I have now heard exactly what I wished to hear." For some moments her voice was lost; but recovering herself, she added, and with greater calmness than before, "I am now perfectly satisfied—I wish for no change. I never could have been happy with him after knowing, as sooner or later I must have known, all this. I should have had no confidence, no esteem."

"I know it, I know it," cried her mother. "No; my Marianne has not a heart to be made happy with such a man!"

Marianne sighed, and repeated, "I wish for no change."

"The whole of his behaviour," replied Elinor, "from the beginning to the end of the affair, has been grounded on selfishness. His own enjoyment, or his own ease, was, in every particular, his ruling principle."

Margaret returned, and the family were again all restored to each other, again quietly settled at the cottage; and if not pursuing their usual studies with quite so much vigour as when they first came to Barton, at least planning a vigorous prosecution of them in future.

Their manservant had been sent one morning to Exeter on business, and when, as he waited at table, he had satisfied the enquiries of his mistress as to the event of his errand, this was his voluntary communication:—

"I suppose you know, ma'am, that Mr. Ferrars is married."

Marianne gave a violent start, fixed her eyes upon Elinor, saw her turning pale, and fell back in her chair in hysterics. Mrs. Dashwood, whose eyes, as she answered the servant's inquiry, had intuitively taken the same direction, was shocked to perceive, by Elinor's countenance, how much she really suffered; and in a moment afterwards, alike distressed by Marianne's situation, knew not on which child to bestow her principal attention.

The servant, who saw only that Miss Marianne was taken ill, had sense enough to call one of the maids, who, with Mrs. Dashwood's assistance, supported her into the other room. By that time Marianne was rather better;

and her mother, leaving her to the care of Margaret and the maid, returned to Elinor, who, though still much disordered, had so far recovered the use of her reason and voice as to be just beginning an inquiry of Thomas as to the source of his intelligence. Mrs. Dashwood immediately took all that trouble on herself; and Elinor had the benefit of the information without the exertion of seeking it.

"Who told you that Mr. Ferrars was married, Thomas?"

"I see Mr. Ferrars myself, ma'am, this morning in Exeter, and his lady too, Miss Steele as was. They was stopping in a chaise at the door of the New London Inn, as I went there with a message from Sally at the Park to her brother, who is one of the post-boys."

"But did she tell you she was married, Thomas?"

"Yes, ma'am. She smiled, and said how she had changed her name since she was in these parts. She was always a very affable and free-spoken young lady, and very civil behaved. So I made free to wish her joy."

"Was Mr. Ferrars in the carriage with her?"

"Yes, ma'am; I just see him leaning back in it. But he did not look up; he never was a gentleman much for talking."

"Do you know where they came from?"

"They come straight from town, as Miss Lucy—Mrs. Ferrars—told me."

"And are going farther westward?"

"Yes, ma'am, but not to bide long. They will soon be back again, and then they'd be sure and call here."

"Did Mrs. Ferrars look well?"

" Yes, ma'am, she said how she was very well. And to my mind she was always a very handsome young lady ; and she seemed vastly contented."

Mrs. Dashwood could think of no other question ; and Thomas and the tablecloth, now alike needless, were soon afterwards dismissed. Marianne had already sent to say that she should eat nothing more. Mrs. Dashwood's and Elinor's appetites were equally lost ; and Margaret might think herself very well off that, with so much uneasiness as both her sisters had lately experienced, so much reason as they had often had to be careless of their meals, she had never been obliged to go without her dinner before.

CHAPTER XLVII

Elinor now found the difference between the expectation of an unpleasant event, however certain the mind may be told to consider it, and certainty itself. She now found that, in spite of herself, she had always admitted a hope, while Edward remained single, that something would occur to prevent his marrying Lucy; that some resolution of his own, some mediation of friends, or some more eligible opportunity of establishment for the lady, would arise to assist the happiness of all. But he was now married, and she condemned her heart for the lurking flattery which so much heightened the pain of the intelligence.

Elinor flattered herself that some one of their connections in London would write to them to announce the event and give further particulars; but day after day passed off, and brought no letter, no tidings. Though uncertain that any one were to blame, she found fault with every absent friend. They were all thoughtless or indolent.

"When do you write to Colonel Brandon, ma'am?" was an inquiry which sprang from the impatience of her mind to have something going on.

"I wrote to him, my love, last week, and rather expect to see than to hear from him again. I earnestly pressed

his coming to us, and should not be surprised to see him walk in to-day, or to-morrow, or any day."

This was gaining something—something to look forward to. Colonel Brandon *must* have some information to give.

Scarcely had she so determined it when the figure of a man on horseback drew her eyes to the window. He stopped at their gate. It was a gentleman—it was Colonel Brandon himself. Now she should hear more, and she trembled in expectation of it. But it was not Colonel Brandon—neither his air nor his height. Were it possible, she should say it must be Edward. She looked again. He had just dismounted ; she could not be mistaken—it *was* Edward. She moved away, and sat down. "I *will* be calm—I *will* be mistress of myself."

In a moment she perceived that the others were likewise aware of the mistake. She saw her mother and Marianne change colour—saw them look at herself, and whisper a few sentences to each other.

Not a syllable passed aloud ; they all waited in silence for the appearance of their visitor. His footsteps were heard along the gravel path ; in a moment he was in the passage, and in another he was before them.

His countenance, as he entered the room, was not too happy, even for Elinor. His complexion was white with agitation, and he looked as if fearful of his reception, and conscious that he merited no kind one. Mrs. Dashwood, however, conforming, as she trusted, to the wishes of that daughter, by whom she then meant, in the warmth of her heart, to be guided in everything, met him with a look of forced complacency, gave him her hand, and wished him joy.

He coloured, and stammered out an unintelligible reply. Elinor's lips had moved with her mother's; and when the moment of action was over, she wished that she had shaken hands with him too. But it was then too late, and with a countenance meaning to be open she sat down again and talked of the weather.

Marianne had retreated as much as possible out of sight to conceal her distress; and Margaret, understanding some part but not the whole of the case, thought it incumbent on her to be dignified, and therefore took a seat as far from him as she could, and maintained a strict silence.

When Elinor had ceased to rejoice in the dryness of the season, a very awful pause took place. It was put an end to by Mrs. Dashwood, who felt obliged to hope that he had left Mrs. Ferrars very well. In a hurried manner he replied in the affirmative.

Another pause.

Elinor, resolving to exert herself, though fearing the sound of her own voice, now said,—

"Is Mrs. Ferrars at Longstaple?"

"At Longstaple!" he replied, with an air of surprise. "No; my mother is in town."

"I meant," said Elinor, taking up some work from the table, "to inquire after Mrs. *Edward* Ferrars."

She dared not look up; but her mother and Marianne both turned their eyes on him. He coloured, seemed perplexed, looked doubtingly, and, after some hesitation, said,—

"Perhaps you mean my brother; you mean Mrs.—Mrs. *Robert* Ferrars."

"Mrs. Robert Ferrars!" was repeated by Marianne

and her mother in an accent of the utmost amazement; and though Elinor could not speak, even *her* eyes were fixed on him with the same impatient wonder. He rose from his seat and walked to the window, apparently from not knowing what to do, took up a pair of scissors that lay there, and, while spoiling both them and their sheath by cutting the latter to pieces as he spoke, said, in a hurried voice,—

"Perhaps you do not know: you may not have heard that my brother is lately married to—to the youngest—to Miss Lucy Steele."

His words were echoed with unspeakable astonishment by all but Elinor, who sat, with her head leaning over her work, in a state of such agitation as made her hardly know where she was.

"Yes," said he; "they were married last week, and are now at Dawlish."

Elinor could sit no longer. She almost ran out of the room, and as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy, which at first she thought would never cease.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Unaccountable, however, as the circumstances of his release might appear to the whole family, it was certain that Edward was free; and to what purpose that freedom would be employed was easily predetermined by all; for after experiencing the blessings of *one* imprudent engagement, contracted without his mother's consent, as he had already done for more than four years, nothing less could be expected of him in the failure of *that* than the immediate contraction of another.

His errand at Barton, in fact, was a simple one. It was only to ask Elinor to marry him; and considering that he was not altogether inexperienced in such a question, it might be strange that he should feel so uncomfortable in the present case as he really did.

How soon he had walked himself into the proper resolution, however, how soon an opportunity of exercising it occurred, in what manner he expressed himself, and how he was received, need not be particularly told. This only need be said, that when they all sat down to table at four o'clock, about three hours after his arrival, he had secured his lady, engaged her mother's consent, and was not only in the rapturous profession of the lover, but, in the reality of reason and truth, one of the happiest of men.

His heart was now open to Elinor, all its weaknesses, all its errors confessed, and his first boyish attachment to Lucy treated with all the philosophic dignity of twenty-four.

"It was a foolish, idle inclination on my side," said he—"the consequence of ignorance of the world and want of employment. I had nothing in the world to do, but to fancy myself in love; and as my mother did not make my home in every respect comfortable, it was not unnatural for me to be very often at Longstaple. Lucy appeared everything that was amiable and obliging. She was pretty too—at least I thought so *then;* and I had seen so little of other women that I could make no comparisons and see no defects. Considering everything, therefore, I hope, foolish as our engagement was, foolish as it has since in every way been proved, it was not at the time unnatural or an inexcusable piece of folly."

The change which a few hours had wrought in the minds and the happiness of the Dashwoods was such—so great—as promised them all the satisfaction of a sleepless night. Mrs. Dashwood, too happy to be comfortable, knew not how to love Edward nor praise Elinor enough, how to be enough thankful for his release without wounding his delicacy, nor how at once to give them leisure for unrestrained conversation together, and yet enjoy, as she wished, the sight and society of both.

Marianne could speak *her* happiness only by tears.

But Elinor—how are *her* feelings to be described? From the moment of learning that Lucy was married to another, that Edward was free, to the moment of his justifying the hopes which had so instantly followed, she was everything by turns but tranquil. But when the

second moment had passed, when she found every doubt, every solicitude removed—compared her situation with what so lately it had been—saw him honourably released form his former engagement—saw him instantly profiting by the release, to address herself and declare an affection as tender, as constant, as she had ever supposed it to be—she was oppressed, she was overcome, by her own felicity; it required several hours to give sedateness to her spirits, or any degree of tranquillity to her heart.

Edward was now fixed at the cottage at least for a week; for whatever other claims might be made on him, it was impossible that less than a week should be given up to the enjoyment of Elinor's company, or suffice to say half that was to be said of the past, the present, and the future.

Lucy's marriage, the unceasing and reasonable wonder among them all, formed, of course, one of the earliest discussions of the lovers.

Edward could only attempt an explanation by supposing that, perhaps, at first accidentally meeting, the vanity of the one had been so worked on by the flattery of the other as to lead by degrees to all the rest.

How long it had been carrying on between them, however, he was equally at a loss with herself to make out; for at Oxford, where he had remained by choice ever since his quitting London, he had had no means of hearing of her but from herself, and her letters to the very last were neither less frequent nor less affectionate than usual. Not the smallest suspicion, therefore, had ever occurred to prepare him for what followed; and when at last it burst on him in a letter from Lucy herself, he had been for some time, he believed, half stupefied

between the wonder, the horror, and the joy of such a deliverance. He put the letter into Elinor's hands.

"DEAR SIR,—Being very sure I have long lost your affections, I have thought myself at liberty to bestow my own on another, and have no doubt of being as happy with him as I once used to think I might be with you; but I scorn to accept a hand while the heart was another's. Sincerely wish you happy in your choice, and it shall not be my fault if we are not always good friends, as our near relationship now makes proper. I can safely say I owe you no ill-will, and am sure you will be too generous to do us any ill offices. Your brother has gained my affections entirely; and as we could not live without one another, we are just returned from the altar, and are now on our way to Dawlish for a few weeks; which place your dear brother has great curiosity to see, but thought I would first trouble you with these few lines, and shall always remain your sincere well-wisher, friend, and sister,

LUCY FERRARS.

"I have burned all your letters, and will return your picture the first opportunity. Please to destroy my scrawls, but the ring with my hair you are very welcome to keep."

Elinor read and returned it without any comment.

One question after this only remained undecided between them; one difficulty only was to be overcome. They were brought together by mutual affection, with the warmest approbation of their real friends; their intimate knowledge of each other seemed to make their happiness certain, and they only wanted something to

live upon. Edward had two thousand pounds, and Elinor one, which, with Delaford living, was all that they could call their own ; for it was impossible that Mrs. Dashwood should advance anything ; and they were neither of them quite enough in love to think that three hundred and fifty pounds a year would supply them with the comforts of life.

About four days after Edward's arrival Colonel Brandon appeared, to complete Mrs. Dashwood's satisfaction, and to give her the dignity of having, for the first time since her living at Barton, more company with her than her house would hold. Edward was allowed to retain the privilege of first comer, and Colonel Brandon, therefore, walked every night to his old quarters at the Park ; from whence he usually returned in the morning, early enough to interrupt the lovers' first *tête-à-tête* before breakfast.

A three weeks' residence at Delaford, where, in his evening hours at least, he had little to do but to calculate the disproportion between thirty-six and seventeen, brought him to Barton in a temper of mind which needed all the improvement in Marianne's looks, all the kindness of her welcome, and all the encouragement of her mother's language, to make it cheerful. Among such friends, however, and such flattery, he did revive. No rumour of Lucy's marriage had yet reached him ; he knew nothing of what had passed ; and the first hours of his visit were consequently spent in hearing and in wondering. Everything was explained to him by Mrs. Dashwood ; and he found fresh reason to rejoice in what he had done for Mr. Ferrars, since eventually it promoted the interest of Elinor.

It would be needless to say that the gentlemen advanced in the good opinion of each other as they advanced in each other's acquaintance, for it could not be otherwise.

The letters from town, which a few days before would have made every nerve in Elinor's body thrill with transport, now arrived to be read with less emotion than mirth. Mrs. Jennings wrote to tell the wonderful tale, to vent her honest indignation against the jilting girl, and pour forth her compassion towards poor Mr. Edward, who, she was sure, had quite doted upon the worthless hussy, and was now, by all accounts, almost broken-hearted at Oxford. "I do think," she continued, "nothing was ever carried on so sly; for it was but two days before Lucy called and sat a couple of hours with me. Not a soul suspected anything of the matter—not even Nancy, who, poor soul, came crying to me the day after, in a great fright for fear of Mrs. Ferrars, as well as not knowing how to get to Plymouth; for Lucy, it seems, borrowed all her money before she went off to be married, on purpose, we suppose, to make a show with, and poor Nancy had not seven shillings in the world; so I was very glad to give her five guineas to take her down to Exeter, where she thinks of staying three or four weeks with Mrs. Burgess, in hopes, as I tell her, to fall in with the doctor again."

Mr. Dashwood's strains were more solemn. Mrs. Ferrars was the most unfortunate of women; poor Fanny had suffered agonies of sensibility; and he considered the existence of each, under such a blow, with grateful wonder. Robert's offence was unpardonable, but Lucy's was infinitely worse. Neither of them was

ever again to be mentioned to Mrs. Ferrars; and even if she might hereafter be induced to forgive her son, his wife should never be acknowledged as her daughter, nor be permitted to appear in her presence. He thus continued:—

"Mrs. Ferrars has never yet mentioned Edward's name, which does not surprise us; but, to our great astonishment, not a line has been received from him on the occasion. Perhaps, however, he is kept silent by his fear of offending; and I shall therefore give him a hint, by a line to Oxford, that his sister and I both think a letter of proper submission from him, addressed perhaps to Fanny, and by her shown to her mother, might not be taken amiss; for we all know the tenderness of Mrs. Ferrars's heart, and that she wishes for nothing so much as to be on good terms with her children."

This paragraph was of some importance to the prospects and conduct of Edward. It determined him to attempt a reconciliation, though not exactly in the manner pointed out by their brother and sister.

"A letter of proper submission!" repeated he. "I can make no submission. I am grown neither humble nor penitent by what has passed. I am grown very happy; but that would not interest. I know of no submission that is proper for me to make."

"You may certainly ask to be forgiven," said Elinor, "because you have offended. And I should think you might *now* venture so far as to profess some concern for having ever formed the engagement which drew on you your mother's anger."

He agreed that he might.

"And when she has forgiven you, perhaps a little humility may be convenient while acknowledging a second engagement, almost as imprudent in her eyes as the first."

CHAPTER XLIX

After a proper resistance on the part of Mrs. Ferrars, just so violent and so steady as to preserve her from that reproach which she always seemed fearful of incurring—the reproach of being too amiable—Edward was admitted to her presence and pronounced to be again her son.

Her family had of late been exceedingly fluctuating. For many years of her life she had had two sons; but the crime and annihilation of Edward, a few weeks ago, had robbed her of one; the similar annihilation of Robert had left her for a fortnight without any; and now, by the resuscitation of Edward, she had one again.

Mrs. Ferrars at first reasonably endeavoured to dissuade him from marrying Miss Dashwood, by every argument in her power; told him that in Miss Morton he would have a woman of higher rank and larger fortune: and enforced the assertion by observing that Miss Morton was the daughter of a nobleman with thirty thousand pounds, while Miss Dashwood was only the daughter of a private gentleman with no more than *three:* but when she found that, though perfectly admitting the truth of her representation, he was by no means inclined to be guided by it, she judged it wisest, from the experience

of the past, to submit; and therefore, after such an ungracious delay as she owed to her own dignity, and as served to prevent every suspicion of goodwill, she issued her decree of consent to the marriage of Edward and Elinor.

What she would engage to do towards augmenting their income was next to be considered; and here it plainly appeared that, though Edward was now her only son, he was by no means her eldest; for while Robert was inevitably endowed with a thousand pounds a year, not the smallest objection was made against Edward's taking orders for the sake of two hundred and fifty at the utmost; nor was anything promised, either for the present or in future, beyond the ten thousand pounds which had been given with Fanny.

It was as much, however, as was desired, and more than was expected, by Edward and Elinor; and Mrs. Ferrars herself, by her shuffling excuses, seemed the only person surprised at her not giving more.

With an income quite sufficient for their wants thus secured for them, they had nothing to wait for after Edward was in possession of the living but the readiness of the house, to which Colonel Brandon, with an eager desire for the accommodation of Elinor, was making considerable improvements; and after waiting some time for their completion—after experiencing, as usual, a thousand disappointments and delays, from the unaccountable dilatoriness of the workmen—Elinor, as usual, broke through the first positive resolution of not marrying till everything was ready; and the ceremony took place in Barton Church early in the autumn.

The first month after their marriage was spent with

their friend at the mansion-house ; from whence they could superintend the progress of the parsonage, and direct everything as they liked on the spot ; could choose papers, project shrubberies, and invent a *sweep*. Mrs. Jennings's prophecies, though rather jumbled together, were chiefly fulfilled, for she was able to visit Edward and his wife in their parsonage by Michaelmas ; and she found in Elinor and her husband, as she really believed, one of the happiest couples in the world. They had, in fact, nothing to wish for but the marriage of Colonel Brandon and Marianne, and rather better pasturage for their cows.

They were visited on their first settling by almost all their relations and friends. Mrs. Ferrars came to inspect the happiness which she was almost ashamed of having authorised ; and even the Dashwoods were at the expense of a journey from Sussex to do them honour.

But though Mrs. Ferrars *did* come to see them, and always treated them with the make-believe of decent affection, they were never insulted by her real favour and preference. *That* was due to the folly of Robert, and the cunning of his wife ; and it was earned by them before many months had passed away. The selfish sagacity of the latter, which had at first drawn Robert into the scrape, was the principal instrument of his deliverance from it ; for her respectful humility, assiduous attentions, and endless flatteries, as soon as the smallest opening was given for their exercise, reconciled Mrs. Ferrars to his choice, and re-established him completely in her favour.

The whole of Lucy's behaviour in the affair, and the prosperity which crowned it, may be held as an instance

of what an unceasing attention to self-interest will do in securing every advantage of fortune.

When Robert first sought her acquaintance, he naturally expected that one or two interviews would settle the matter; though Lucy soon gave him hopes that his eloquence would convince her in *time*, another visit, another conversation, was always wanted to produce this conviction. Instead of talking of Edward, they came gradually to talk only of Robert—a subject on which he had always more to say than on any other, and in which she soon betrayed an interest even equal to his own; and, in short, it became speedily evident to both that he had entirely supplanted his brother. He was proud of his conquest, proud of tricking Edward, and very proud of marrying privately without his mother's consent. What immediately followed is known. They passed some months in great happiness at Dawlish, for she had many relations and old acquaintance to cut; and he drew several plans for magnificent cottages; and from thence returning to town, procured the forgiveness of Mrs. Ferrars, by the simple expedient of asking it, which, at Lucy's instigation, was adopted. The forgiveness, at first, indeed, as was reasonable, comprehended only Robert; and Lucy, who had owed his mother no duty, and therefore could have transgressed none, still remained some weeks longer unpardoned. But perseverance in humility of conduct and messages, in self-condemnation for Robert's offence, and gratitude for the unkindness she was treated with, procured her in time the haughty notice which overcame her by its graciousness, and led soon afterwards, by rapid degrees, to the highest state of affection and influence. Lucy became

as necessary to Mrs. Ferrars as either Robert or Fanny; and while Edward was never cordially forgiven for having once intended to marry her, and Elinor, though superior to her in fortune and birth, was spoken of as an intruder, *she* was in everything considered, and always openly acknowledged, to be a favourite child.

Elinor's marriage divided her as little from her family as could well be contrived, without rendering the cottage at Barton entirely useless, for her mother and sisters spent much more than half their time with her. Mrs. Dashwood was acting on motives of policy as well as pleasure in the frequency of her visits at Delaford. Precious as was the company of her daughter to her, she desired nothing so much as to give up its constant enjoyment to her valued friend; and to see Marianne settled at the mansion-house was equally the wish of Edward and Elinor.

Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen, and with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship voluntarily to give her hand to another, and that other a man who had suffered no less than herself under the event of a former attachment, whom, two years before, she had considered too old to be married, and who still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat!

But so it was. Instead of falling a sacrifice to an irresistible passion, as once she had fondly flattered herself with expecting—instead of remaining even for

ever with her mother, and finding her only pleasures in retirement and study, as afterwards in her more calm and sober judgment she had determined on—she found herself at nineteen submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village.

Colonel Brandon was now as happy as all those who best loved him believed he deserved to be: in Marianne he was consoled for every past affliction; her regard and her society restored his mind to animation and his spirits to cheerfulness; and that Marianne found her own happiness in forming his was equally the persuasion and delight of each observing friend. Marianne could never love by halves; and her whole heart became, in time, as much devoted to her husband as it had once been to Willoughby.

Willoughby could not hear of her marriage without a pang; and his punishment was soon afterwards complete, in the voluntary forgiveness of Mrs. Smith, who, by stating his marriage with a woman of character as the source of her clemency, gave him reason for believing that had he behaved with honour towards Marianne he might at once have been happy and rich. That his repentance of misconduct, which thus brought its own punishment, was sincere, need not be doubted; nor that he long thought of Colonel Brandon with envy, and of Marianne with regret. But that he was for ever inconsolable, that he fled from society, or contracted an habitual gloom of temper, or died of a broken heart, must not be depended on, for he did neither. He lived to exert and frequently to enjoy himself. His wife was not always out of humour, nor his home always uncomfortable;

and in his breed of horses and dogs, and in sporting of every kind, he found no inconsiderable degree of domestic felicity.

For Marianne, however, in spite of his incivility in surviving her loss, he always retained that decided regard which interested him in everything that befell her, and made her his secret standard of perfection in woman ; and many a rising beauty would be slighted by him in after-days as bearing no comparison with Mrs. Brandon.

Mrs. Dashwood was prudent enough to remain at the cottage without attempting a removal to Delaford ; and fortunately for Sir John and Mrs. Jennings, when Marianne was taken from them, Margaret had reached an age highly suitable for dancing, and not very ineligible for being supposed to have a lover.

Between Barton and Delaford there was that constant communication which strong family affection would naturally dictate ; and among the merits and the happiness of Elinor and Marianne, let it not be ranked as the least considerable that, though sisters, and living almost within sight of each other, they could live without disagreement between themselves, or producing coolness between their husbands.

NOTES

P. 1, l. 4. Note the use of the word ' respectable ' here in its original meaning. With us it has come to have a certain sense of middle-class dullness, quite foreign to its original meaning, which was that of meriting respect in the highest sense.

P. 2, l. 30. **Mother-in-law.** Jane Austen uses this word incorrectly, in the same way as does Dickens in reference to the second Mrs. Weller in *Pickwick*. The word used should be step-mother, the correct way of describing the relationship of a man's second wife to the children of his first. Here Mrs. Dashwood was the second wife of John Dashwood's father, just as the forbidding female always addressed by Sam Weller as ' Mother-in-law,' was the second wife of Sam's father, old Tony Weller.

P. 10, l. 17. **Barouche** : the smart carriage of the day. The word barouche is of Italian origin, though French in spelling and pronunciation. The carriage was four-wheeled, with a hood that could be raised or lowered at will : it held four persons, and had besides a seat in front for the driver.

P. 83, l. 25. **Filigree.** This was a delicate form of bead-work, usually carried out in gold or silver beads, on thread or very fine wire, from which small boxes or baskets could be made. It was more difficult than the ordinary beading which has become popular again of late, as the wire could be fashioned into stiff shapes, such as boxes or baskets, not merely limp articles such as bags or scarves.

P. 84, l. 14. **Cassino.** This card game was evidently the ' Bridge ' of Jane Austen's day, and a serious rival to Whist. She mentions it several times in her books and letters. Eleven points constituted a game : the ten of Dia-

monds was Great Cassino, or Great Cass, and counted two points; the two of Spades was Little Cassino or Little Cass, and counted one point. In *Pride and Prejudice* 'Miss de Bourgh chose to play at cassino' at one table, while her mother made up a party for quadrille at another.

P. 96, l. 4. **Conduit Street,** completed in 1713, and named from a stream in Conduit Mead between Piccadilly and Paddington, a space of twenty-seven acres. It is lined with shops to-day, but then was a fashionable residential street. In 1772 Boswell lodged there and entertained Johnson to tea.

P. 108. l. 7. **Willoughby.** Note the fashion of the day by which a gentleman was addressed by his lady friends without any prefix to his surname. The fashion died out gradually in mid-Victorian days, though it survived for a time in the case of great ladies speaking of or to men under their patronage.

P. 112. l. 7. **Lavender drops:** this was evidently taken as a restorative, though we do not think of it as anything but a perfume. There is a recipe in the British Pharmacopeia for Spirits of Lavender to be given as a dose.

P. 115. l. 17. **Constantia wine:** this is wine produced on the Constantia farm near Cape Town, South Africa.

P. 121, l. 10. **Sponging-house:** this was a kind of halfway house to the debtor's prison. It was kept by a bailiff or sheriff's officer, and men and women were confined there by their creditors, with scanty hopes of regaining their freedom under the iniquitous laws relating to debt prevailing at the time.

P. 124, l. 6. **Met by appointment:** in other words, they met to fight a duel. This custom came in from France originally, and was not put down in England till the early part of Queen Victoria's reign, when she and the Prince Consort did much to bring about its abolition. A duel was a private combat between two persons, arranged by a challenge beforehand, and fought in the presence of not less than two witnesses, called seconds, and with deadly weapons. Such challenges were usually given to decide personal quarrels, or points of honour.

P. 127, l. 20. **Bartlett's Buildings,** near Holborn Circus, named after Thomas Bartlett, who originally owned the property. Bartlett Passage, leading from Bartlett's Buildings to

Fetter Lane, contains the house where Charles Lamb and his sister went to school, he in the day, she in the evening with the other girl scholars.

P. 129, l. 5. **Gray's in Sackville Street.** In his fine edition of Jane Austen's works Mr. Chapman gives this note: 'The New Annual Directory for 1800 records "Gray and Constable, Jewellers, 41 Sackville Street, Piccadilly." In the Post Office Annual Directory for 1810 it is "Gray Thomas, Jeweller."'

P. 130, l. 27. The Wild Beast Show at Exeter Exchange began in the eighteenth century, and lasted till the year 1828.

P. 134, l. 5. **Harley Street**: it was John Dashwood and his wife who lived at Harley Street, not the doctor, as it would be to-day when it is the home of so many of the medical profession. The street was originally named after the 2nd Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, the founder of the Harleian Library, and has been the home of many eminent people, among others, William Pitt, John Stuart Mill, and Gladstone.

P. 177, l. 19. **Apothecary**: the word originally denoted the keeper of a storehouse for medicines, and one licensed to act as a doctor. Later it was used to mark the distinction between what we should call a general practitioner and a specialist.

P. 187, l. 8. **Nuncheon**: the word literally means a noon draught or cup. So first it meant a drink, then a slight meal, and gradually was merged in our luncheon. In one of her letters Jane Austen says: 'Immediately after noonshine . . . a party set off for Bucknell.'

P. 225, l. 30. **He did neither.** You would not expect the word neither here, as it is in relation to three, not two, alternatives.

HELPS TO FURTHER STUDY

I. *The Novels.* There are many excellent editions. The most elaborate and authoritative, for reference, is Mr. R. W. Chapman's (Oxford Press, 1924, 5 vols.) *Sanditon*: Fragment of a Novel written by Jane Austen (Oxford Press, 1925).

II. *Jane Austen's Life.* 1. Memoir by her nephew, J. E. Austen Leigh. The second edition contains *The Watsons* (imperfect) and *Lady Susan.* 2. *Jane Austen*, by F. Warre Cornish (English Men of Letters Series). 3. *Letters of Jane Austen*, edited by Lord Brabourne. 4. Article by Leslie Stephen in Dictionary of National Biography.

III. *Criticism.* 1. *Jane Austen*, by A. C. Bradley, in "Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association," Vol. II.; "Sentiment and Sensibility in the Eighteenth Century Novel," by Edith Birkhead in Vol. XI. 2. "Cambridge History of English Literature," Vol. XII., chapter by Harold Child. 3. "Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830," by Oliver Elton, Vol. I. ch. 6. 4. References to the novels in Macaulay's Life. 5. "The English Novel," by Sir Walter Raleigh.

IV. The social background of the period may be studied in Traill's *Social England*, Vol. V. (chapters on the Church and the State of Society); G. M. Trevelyan's *British History in the Nineteenth Century*; Sir Walter Besant's *London in the Eighteenth Century* (Historical Notes: London at the end of the Century. Manners and Customs: ch. 4, Dress; ch. 9, Position of Women; ch. 15, Duelling. Society and Amusements: ch. 1, Society).

QUESTIONS AND SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS

1. What did Jane Austen mean by 'sensibility'? How is it shown in the character of Marianne?

2. Do you consider that Elinor and Marianne Dashwood would be popular with girls of their own age to-day? In what ways would they be different from them?

3. How would you have spent your time as a visitor at Mrs. Jennings's London house? What would you have missed most from the London of our own day?

4. Give any details of dress you can from *Sense and Sensibility*, and say if there is a difference in fashion to-day.

5. Give the character of any heroine in a novel you like, and compare her either with Elinor or Marianne.

6. Describe Barton Cottage and its surroundings.

7. Give the context of the following passages: (*a*) 'a gentleman carrying a gun, with two pointers playing round him. . . .' (*b*) 'At any rate I shall expect you to-morrow. For the present adieu.' (*c*) 'Who told you that Mr. Ferrars was married, Thomas?'

8. Compare the character of Edward Ferrars with that of Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*.

9. Do you consider Elinor's attentions to Marianne excessive?

10. What were the leading traits in the characters of John Dashwood and Sir John Middleton?

11. Who were Robert Ferrars, William Middleton, the Doctor, and Mrs. Smith?

12. Describe and contrast the two daughters of Mrs. Jennings.

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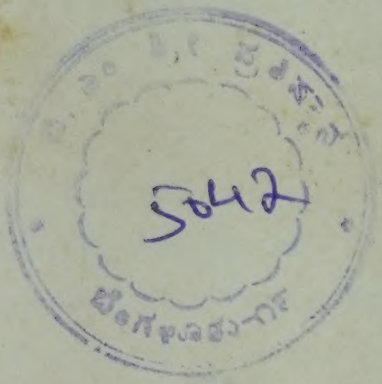
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